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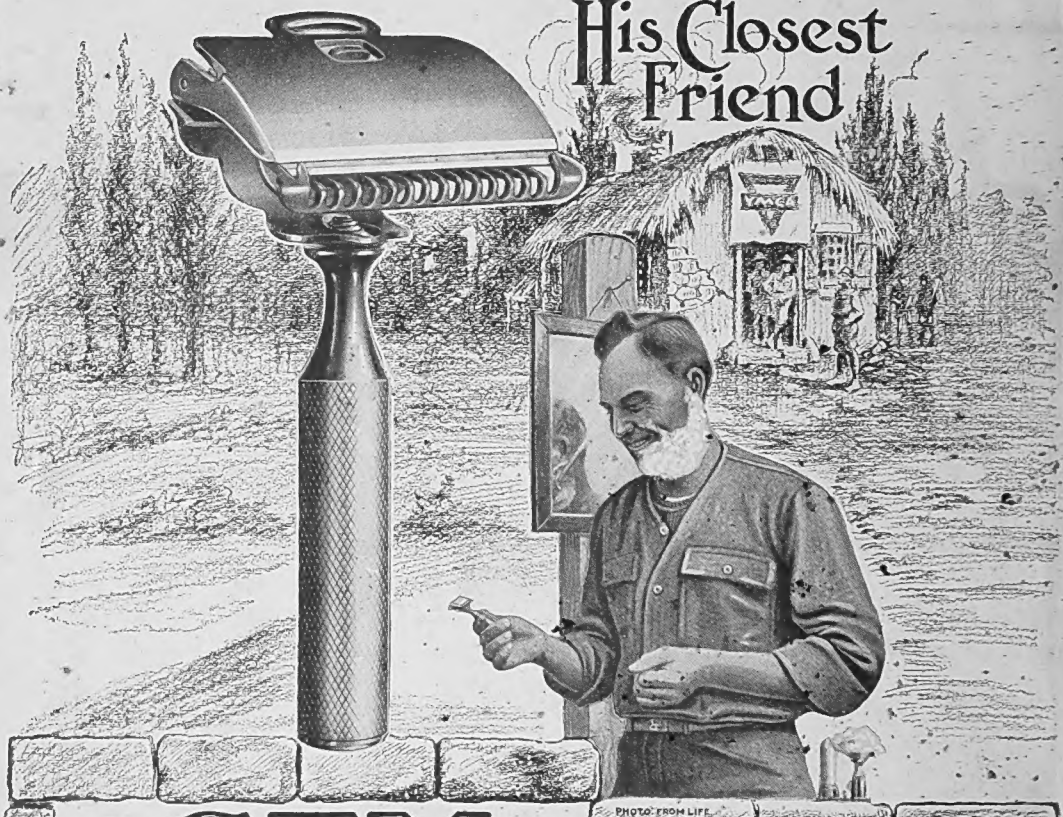

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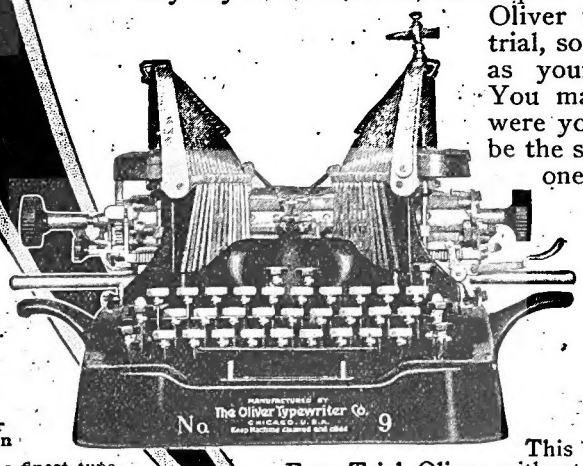

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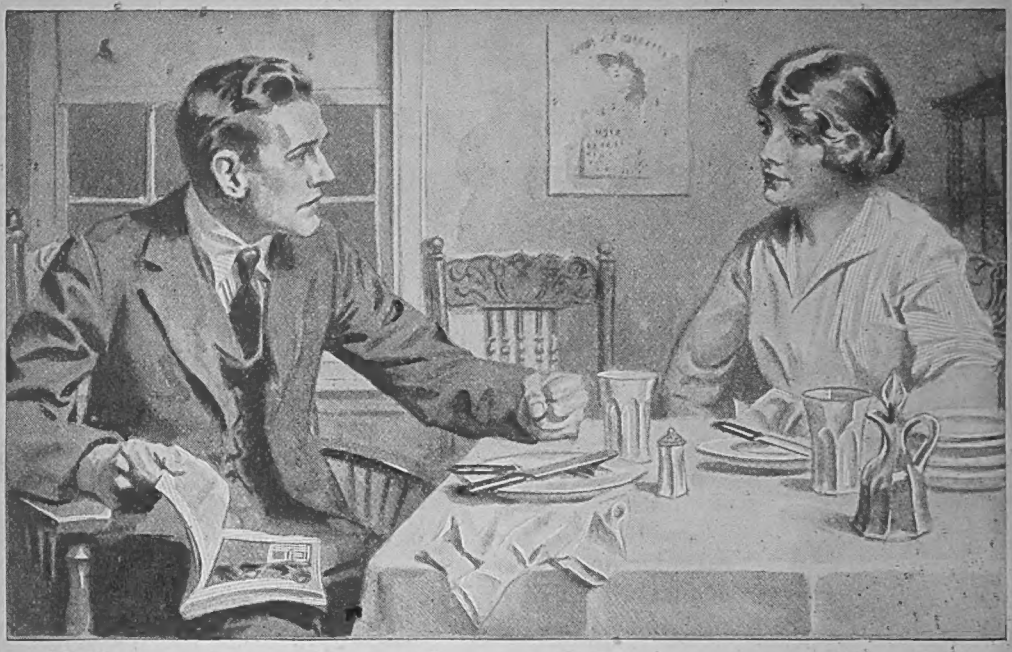

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March 18, 1919
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For other stories in the next number, turn to the Trail Ahead on page 192.

FIRST APRIL ISSUE

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Adventure
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March 10, 1919
VOL. 20 NO. 6.

Heinie Horns into the Game

An Up-and-down-the-Earth Tale

A Complete Novelette

by **Talbot Mundy**

Author of "Oakes Respects an Adversary," "Jackson Tactics," etc.

This is the fourth of a series of tales, each a complete story in itself, in which an American and three English friends endeavor to gain by any honest means a large sum of money which is particularly needed by one of them, "Monty" (Lord Montdidier). The fortune varies, but the goal remains the same. Hitherto they have come in contact mainly with Portuguese venality, but now the ante-bellum Prussian schemer shows his hand—and teeth.

"SIXPENCE," our Shangan factotum, was out of sight at the moment, although I did not notice it. Four other boys of four tribes and species of ugliness were trying to remove breakfast things without his supervision, yet without breaking plates or cups. Montdidier had got the chess-board out on his knees in the shade of a wagon. Oakes, songful of a morning, had the rest of our personal gang in charge tidying up the compound. Bill Yerkes and I were smoking on the parapet that overlooked all trails to the horizon, as well as our gold claims, staked out on the level land between the spurs of the hill beneath. To look at us a casual observer might have guessed that we were lords of all Gazaland, from the mountains to the sea.

I had one eye on Cadji, the Portuguese official member of our party, and liked the look of him no better then he seemed to like us. Your Portuguese objects as fiercely as any other breed of man to being ducked head-foremost in a water-butt, and, for good cause given, we had done that job thoroughly.

Not that I was seriously considering him. I was speculating rather on the inscrutable quality of destiny, that could bring together into partnership such different types of men as Lord Montdidier, Fred Oakes, Bill Yerkes, and me. I wondered what exactly made clear that sharp distinction between our collective way of looking at the world and Cadji's, notwithstanding we were each as different in temperament as the four winds. What lies behind the racial hatreds, anyway? But the eye I kept on Cadji did not sleep.

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"Bill," I said presently. "That rascal would rather make trouble for us than steal money."

Cadji sat in the sunshine, wringing wet garments one by one, meeting no man's eye, not muttering, but exuding adjectives. Yerkes looked him over, filling his pipe slowly.

"Pity he wasn't in there with the outlaws," he remarked, nodding toward the charred props of the house, in which all but one of the sixteen du Mauriers had been blown to smithereens the night before. "It isn't his fault we're alive to look at him! I'm guessing just how far he was obeying Government orders last night, and how far speculating on his own account. Think it over."

I thought it over rather hazily for several minutes, not exactly helped by the antics of Fred Oakes, whose method of making black men work swiftly is to play the outrageous goat for them. He was waking echoes with his concertina and yowling "*killeloo*" at the far side of the compound, imitating a hypothetical witch-doctor doing a never-yet-invented devil-dance—behaving, that is to say, as no dignified Portuguese official would ever dream of doing, but getting the work done. He is not Irish, which accounts for his hilarious success with comic alleged Irish songs.

Already no new arrival on the scene could easily have been persuaded that the bodies of fifteen men mixed up with miscellaneous débris had been scattered all over the hilltop but a few hours back.

"Cadji was loaned to us by his fiasco of a Government," said Yerkes, with that aged expression American young men so readily assume and cast aside, "for two alleged purposes. First, to check up on our gold claims and give us clear title. Second, to hang legally as many of the du Mauriers as we could round up and corral. Cadji's an honest-to-goodness high court judge—little though he looks it! Am I right?"

"So far," said I.

"Well," he went on, "I'm one who saw and heard him try to get away without doing a thing about our claims—although he has a ten per cent. interest by way of payment in advance."

"I bear you out," said I.

"I'm one who saw Charles du Maurier, bound hand and foot, left in his custody."

"It was I who tied him," said I.

"I'm one who saw Cadji look the other way while said Charles du Maurier, with his feet unaccountably free, made a dash for liberty. Did you see that too? How did du Maurier die?"

"Missed his footing, and dashed his brains out against the cliff," I answered.

"You saw that? We all saw it. Cadji saw it. I saw him see it! But I'm one who heard him accuse us afterward of killing Charles du Maurier."

"I heard that, too," said I. "We all heard it."

"I'm one who saw him sneak into this compound last night—after we had let him go, mind you, at his own request—saw him sneak in with the enemy at the time they attacked us. I heard him call to Anatole du Maurier, the gang's leader, in a manner that convinced me he stood in with them to put us out of business. I heard him whisper to some one he thought in the dark was Anatole, to hide until the fight was over."

"He whispered that to me. He mistook me in the dark for Anatole," said I.

"The question is," said Yerkes, "did his Government instruct him to play us false; or did he play traitor on his own account?"

"Who cares for his motives?" said I. "He's caught, tried, and found guilty. What shall we do to him?"

"Would our House of Lords dare hang him?" suggested Yerkes, with a glance over at Monty.

"Scarcely," I said. "The little beast is a Government official. Besides his title and good standing, Monty is a cavalry colonel on half-pay. Cadji's life is probably safe, as far as we're concerned."

"What a pity our Monty isn't a social outcast!" laughed Yerkes. "All the same—hello, what's the program now?"

There was a strange assembly gathering. From the side of the compound where our mules were housed in one of the dead robber's store-sheds, there began to come cattle—oxen, cows, sheep, and goats; also the widows and ex-concubines of the outlaw owner of all that plunder, with their little snuff-and-butter brats, herded in a sort of market bunch by the scoundrel's hirelings, most of whom had chosen to remain with us. Monty had given the order, for he did not look up from his chess, although the noise was prodigious.

Other natives came carrying corn bags. A dozen of them rolled an enormous vat of

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Kafir beer, whose bung started explosively at every other revolution and had to be replaced. Two of the beer contingent were three-parts drunk already. Natives came running from every shed, carrying on their heads, or dragging along the ground every conceivable and inconceivable contraption, representing the efforts of fifteen or twenty years by a bandit to grow rich. A history of trading expeditions into Gazaland could have been written from a survey of that heterogeneous junk.

"It seems to me," I said, "there are twice as many natives in the compound as there were at dawn."

"Look!" said Yerkes, and pointed.

I saw three skin-and-boney Rongas climb over the parapet as he spoke, and drop down among the crowd as nonchalantly as the crows alight in a cornfield.

"Who put the countryside wise, I wonder?" Yerkes lit his pipe again and looked at me. "Anatole du Maurier made his getaway. I'll bet he has tipped off every chief for miles around to send men to share the loot. Monty 'll refuse to divvy among new arrivals—sure. Trouble for us! Look at Cadji! See him grin! He's in on this! Where are his four boys? I'll bet in four directions stirring trouble!"

We got down off the parapet and hurried toward Monty, but Monty was still playing chess with himself and undisturbable.

"Hey!" said Yerkes. "Cut your game short and start some real thinking! Every savage between here and the Limpopo is swarming in on us!"

"Of course!" said Monty. "The more the merrier!" And he went on studying the chess-board.

"Dramatic stuff!" said Yerkes disgustedly behind his hand to me. "It makes me tired. It might get across the footlights. It might reassure Tommies. You? Me? It's an insult to our intelligence! If he'd scratch his head and look like a man in doubt, I'd feel more confident."

"But I don't think he is in doubt," I said.

To my mind Monty's attitude toward life's problems was genuine, not assumed.

"I do!" said Yerkes with a wry face. "He has pulled off a lot, I admit. Some was luck, and some good management. But you heard Fred say yesterday that life's no use to Monty unless he can make drama of it. Fred knows him. I'm not acting in a play—I'm after hard cash in deadly earnest!"

"So is he," I answered. "He needs money to take home and keep up the title. He's after millions."

"Believe me," said Yerkes, grinning, "I'll be content with hundreds if we get out of this mess alive."

MEANWHILE, Fred Oakes had joined the round-up and was getting something approaching order out of the chaos savages prefer if left to their own devices. We took a hand, and in half an hour we had Charles du Maurier's black widows with their brats at a table beside Monty, all the male natives in a circle facing us, and the cattle with the other plunder in the midst.

Our own boys, in a group behind us, I thought looked glum—a good, upstanding little company of eleven different tribes—nine-and-twenty coal-black, wooly-headed aborigines, each one uglier than any other imaginable creature, but his neighbor. Well-fed, and having spent most of the early morning laughing under Fred's care, they scarcely seemed to call for sympathy; but a second look at them convinced me they anticipated trouble.

Personally, I expected trouble of the worst kind the moment Monty should call in question the unauthorized arrivals. I brought out my rifle from the wagon in which we slept the night before, and gave Yerkes his as well.

Monty closed the chess-board at last, and turned his chair so as to face the crowd. There was an instant lull in the babel of voices. The natives recognized him as our chief by a sort of instinct. I suspected then, and do still, that Bill Yerkes would have yielded unquestioning allegiance to Monty sooner, but for that trick of commanding recognition.

Oakes and I were rather proud of him on that account. In Yerkes' case it was not jealousy; but he was raised where the school-books preach against command by right of birth. Cadji, who on the contrary, was autocratic in thought and word and deed, pulled on his wet clothes and joined us at the table.

"Sixpence!" commanded Monty, and the Shangan appeared from somewhere or other, instantly athrill with the mongrel Zulu's instinct for dramatic crisis.

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Few true interpreters are born such, and not very many made; but to an instinct for the business Sixpence had superadded skill, acquired by practise and keen observation of effect. He threw a chest, and with a sweep of flashing eyes—a gesture of outflung arm—and a stamp of his right foot on the earth, commanded general attention.

Cadji, close beside me, observing another dozen black arrivals drop from the parapet at different points, grinned into my face malevolently. I noticed that Monty saw him grin.

"We have with us," said Monty, "an officer of the Portuguese Government!"

Sixpence, with upflung arm, translated. Cadji shut his yellow teeth with a startled snap. Oakes caught my eye and grinned. Yerkes took a stand rather closer to Cadji as if he expected the little yellow man to make a bolt for it. We were all taken by surprize.

"A judge of the Portuguese high court!" said Monty, and Sixpence threw enthusiasm into that.

If he had been announcing the presence among us of an archangel he could not have been more impressive; but there was no symptom of appreciation by the audience. On the contrary, there grew a kind of restlessness—a shifting from one foot to the other, and resentment a man could feel without knowing how it was expressed.

"He is here," said Monty, "on Government business."

Monty's face was an enigma—Cadji's an exclamation mark.

Sixpence made the announcement in that clicking, clucking lingua franca they all understood, and twenty of the new arrivals, slipping stealthily to the rear, bolted by the way they had come.

"Now ask what they think they stand here waiting for," said Monty, and Sixpence threw an attitude expressing outraged surprize that they should carry no banner having aims and reasons printed on it.

The spoken question was an explosion of contemptuous sounds. Unless to make requests, one seldom asks politely on the high or low veld.

A bold-looking woman was the first to answer, her two naked brats clinging to her. It is not only in educated lands that anti-suffrage is instinctively in the sex. The other women held aloof as from a moral leper; but two men followed her lead, and then in a minute the whole crowd was shouting in a babel that presently evolved itself into repetition of one sentence. Sixpence listened arrogantly, and then held both hands high for silence.

"Them niggahs saying," he translated, "you—big *baas**—making promise yestahday—you giving them to-day all dem tings belonging Charles du Maurier. Them saying—now you give!"

"All right!" said Monty, with a nod in the affirmative that made the assembly gasp.

The thing was too good to be true.

"But listen!"

Sixpence checked the rising babel with a gesture of royal impatience.

"The loot was to be divided in equal shares between our servants and du Maurier's. So it shall be!"

Our own boys behind us burst into a cheer, and the ivory gleamed white across nine-and-twenty physiognomies. Gone was depression. But some of the crowd in front looked surly, at the notion of our boys—whom they regarded of course as foreigners—having a finger in the pie. The Shangan and the Ronga are as foreign to each other as the Greek and Esquimaux, and there seemed to me the makings of a first-class fight. But Monty had the situation well in hand.

"Without our good boys," he said, "there would have been no plunder to divide. Du Maurier would have still been tyrant of these hills. But Du Maurier is dead. The plunder lies ready, and our boys shall have first pick!"

Sixpence translated that, like Mark Antony converting the Roman mob to new respect for Cæsar. The whole business of victors giving away their plunder was too bewildering, and the promptness too breathtaking for objection to take shape; and Monty wasted no time.

"Sixpence! You choose first!" he ordered, and the Shangan became one avaricious grin.

There was no doubt for a moment what his choice would be. With unanimity born of generations that regarded cattle as the mark of wealth, every man and woman in the crowd singled out the best milch cow and watched him go and take it. Not one hesitated; the selection of the best was made instantly and expertly by every eye.

*_Baas_—master. The Bantu word from which the American "boss" may possibly be derived.

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One by one, each of our boys was given leave to choose, and when they had all done there were cows enough left to give du Maurier's dusky widows one apiece, and a few dry ones remaining.

"Write out deeds of gift," said Monty. "Write that the cow, or whatever the property happens to be, was given by me in pursuance of authority vested in me by contract over the seal of the Portuguese Government."

So I sat at the table and wrote certificates of ownership on slips of paper, passing them to Monty to sign.

"Set your official seal on that!" he ordered, signing the first one, and passing it to Cadji.

"I have no authority!" said Cadji, bridling.

"You have your seal," said Monty.

"But I have no orders!" snarled Cadji.

"D'you mean you didn't hear me give an order?" demanded Monty, in a tone of interested inquiry.

"You can not order me!" snapped Cadji.

"Oh!" said Monty. "Have you seen this?"

He drew out the contract the lieutenant-governor had given him, deeding to him whatever property he might find in the du Maurier lair, as part consideration for ridding the Libomba Hills of outlaws.

"My purpose," he said, flourishing the paper in front of Cadji's face, "is to make this plunder over to the natives in such way that you can't take it away from them. Be good enough to seal the slips!"

CADJI refused. His restless eye sought help where none was, sweeping in vain the sea of dark faces, and the rocky parapet that, from where we all stood, shut off the view of everything beyond but clear blue sky.

"I will go," he said nervously. "Where are my own men?"

"Call them!" suggested Monty.

Cadji raised his voice into that peculiar, rasping shout that the wide world over, marks a mean man. He first used Portuguese, and then, since there was no response, Chironga. Possibly he forgot that Yerkes learned Portuguese in Brazil, and that Monty knew something of the native tongue.

"He is calling for help in the name of his Government! He demands their allegiance!" said Yerkes, and Monty was swift to seize the advantage.

"Senhor Cadji," he said, nodding to Sixpence to interpret, "will take for his own use as porters all those natives who were not here last night! Let them all fall in, between us and the gate."

The answer was an instant stampede. The Government corvée was too well understood in that graft-ridden land for any Ronga in his senses to wait and take a chance. In less than two minutes there was none inside the gate except those who had right there.

"That gets rid of the undesirables, I think," said Monty in an aside to me.

Cadji stood snatching at his little black mustache and shred of imperial, his other hand guarding the hip pocket that bulged with his official seal.

"We shouldn't have ducked the dago," whispered Yerkes.

"Piffle, America!" said Fred Oakes, coming between us. "We ought to have drowned him! Duck him again! Come on!"

"In London or New York, a ducking, or a kick, or a black eye don't much matter," Yerkes went on, "although they'll lock you up for calling names. In Paris, Lisbon, and Madrid offense against the person is the serious crime, say what you like, and no harm done; but kick a pimp, for instance, and they jail you! That's one reason why the English are unpopular abroad—they never understand that."

But Monty was growing impatient, as the sun mounted steadily and the morning wind announced that only about four hours were remaining until noon.

"We're waiting for you to seal those certificates, Senhor Cadji!" he remarked; and once more Cadji's roving eye sought help.

"He's expecting somebody," said Fred Oakes.

"There's a card up his sleeve. He's trying to gain time for some reason, or I'll eat my hat!" announced Yerkes.

"He expects help through the gate," said I. "He looks that way whenever he thinks we don't notice."

"I suspect Senhor Cadji had us sold at least twice over before he came away with us from Lourenço Marques," said Monty with a pleasant grin. "While he thought I was playing chess after breakfast he whispered to his own four boys to escape and

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warn some party to hurry and take us by surprize. I put Sixpence to work at once, and if you care to look you'll find the four boys tied hand and foot in that wagon over there!"

"A shame we ducked him, was it?" Oakes jeered. "We shouldn't have ducked him, eh?"

Yerkes laughed, and Oakes and he eyed the convenient water-butt suggestively, with bursts of laughter that made Cadji splutter and turn even yellower. I think they would have turned suggestion into action had not Monty interfered.

"For the last time—be good enough to seal those certificates, *senhor!*"

Cadji hesitated—glanced furtively to right and left—shrugged his shoulders—and chose discretion, taking a seat at the table with a sidewise glare at Oakes and Yerkes that spoke volumes for his opinion of horse-play. Sealing was merely a matter of squeezing the paper slips between the jaws of a little pocket vice; but it made a prodigious difference to the value the slips would have for their possessors.

One by one, every cow, bullock, goat, sheep, chicken, blanket, cooking-pot, length of iron wire, piece of cheap calico, package of tobacco, bag of corn, knife, ax, leather thong, and what-not was chosen and became the certificated property of some one; until at last the women stood in a group alone, with their brats and their share of the plunder.

All the men had retired to the sheds, to compare luck, make merry, and drink the beer that, as a precaution against total drunkenness Monty ordered distributed by quarts to all and sundry. The women eyed us and their plunder wistfully, chattered—hesitated—made up their minds and took a bee-line for the beer. But Monty called them back.

"Has any one of you fellows a notion what to do with them?" he asked, and Oakes yelled with delight.

"Marry 'em, Monty! You marry 'em! Be King of the Libombas! That's why Charles du Maurier married 'em! Under Portuguese law whoever marries a chief's daughter falls heir to his estates. Take unto yourself some wives! Take an assortment of pretty countesses home to Montdidier Towers! Present 'em at court, Monty! You owe it to the British nation to give 'em a new scandal in high life! Come on—ring the wedding bells—it's proposed, seconded and carried unanimously that Monty ceases to be a bachelor!"

"Why not marry 'em to Cadji?" suggested Yerkes. "That 'd make him King of the Libombas. He'd have to be a what-d'-ye-call-it—a constitutional monarch, with us cabinet ministers. We make decrees; he signs and seals 'em! Are you a bachelor, Cadji?"

"*Senhores*, I have a wife in ——"

"In every port!" Oakes cut in. "Shame, Cadji! I'm ashamed of you! Hurry up, Monty, and marry him off. He's got the habit; you may as well give in and let him have his wilful way. Will you marry 'em to him one by one, or all in a lump? Which is the orthodox style? Have to be orthodox, you know!"

Cadji glared about him wildly, in no mood to appreciate a jest. The horse-play type of humor makes no appeal to men whose corrupt politics wear dignity for a disguise; and a joke at his own expense was an insult in any event. Besides, he was not sure about the joke. He more than suspected the proposal might be deadly serious.

Monty, handsome as the devil, leaned back in his chair and laughed silently. His black mustache was waxed into points as carefully as if he were sitting in the House of Lords. The grime and smoke of last night's explosion—the blood from the slight wound on his cheek—the very smell of blasting powder had been washed and groomed away. With bare throat and collar-bones exposed by the open polo shirt, and his general air of athletic manliness, he was just the man to inspire confidence in an Anglo-Saxon; but Cadji lacked the advantage of fair-playing ancestry, and was far from reassured.

"Which will you do?" demanded Monty. "Be married to them, or marry them off officially to men of their own choosing?"

"Neither can be!" Cadji stammered. "They are wards of Government! I claim their property in trust on behalf of my Government!"

"Salary, emoluments and graft," hummed Bill Yerkes brutally, "and the sweetest of these is graft!"

"Aren't you a judge of the high court?" Monty asked.

"Yes!" said Cadji. "I warn you, you tamper with danger, *senhores*, to treat me disrespectfully!"

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"We'll treat you like Henry VIII., my saffron Lothario!" grinned Oakes.

"Sixpence!" commanded Monty, and the Shangan came running.

"Ask those women whether they want husbands?"

Sixpence addressed them collectively, in the brusque, abusive manner natives consider dignified toward their womenfolk.

"Them answering 'Why not?'" he announced.

"Call back the men!" commanded Monty.

"Tell them to leave their plunder where it is, and come and stand in acircle."

THERE was already a market in full swing, bartering and selling, quarreling and offering for sale. All the new plunder, except the female animals, for they are too valuable ever to part with except in trade for a woman, was changing hands, together with Monty's signed and sealed certificates, as if Monty had set up a stock exchange; and it was only with difficulty that Sixpence broke up the session and persuaded them to shift ground.

"Ask," said Monty, as soon as they were gathered in a ring again, and reasonably still, "which of them would like to marry one of Charles du Maurier's widows."

The widows stood looking foolish, exceedingly self-conscious and abashed, while Sixpence put the astonishing inquiry. A red cotton blanket is not much of a garment in which to seem coquettish, but the native standard is less exacting than the Western, and they did their best.

There was no question of their eligibility. They represented the peak of Ronga chivalry's desire—young women, each with at least one child—and one had three. And were there not the milch cows, deeded one to each in writing, besides other plunder? Nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine times out of a thousand, since the dear old days of intertribal war and marriage by force departed, the black man who wants a wife must work and earn cows with which to pay for her—and the price of wives, like that of most necessities, goes up and up. Yet here were brides free, gratis, with cows thrown in! The meeting was unanimous. There was a forest of upthrown arms, a flash of white ivory, and a yell that left no doubt. Nevertheless, Sixpence did the full measure of his duty.

"Each man demanding whole —— lot!" he translated.

"Tell the married men to fall out!" ordered Monty.

They had left their plunder in the charge of dejected women who were presumably the wives of some of them, but Sixpence's retort was unexpected.

"All them men got one wife—some getting two—some three!"

"Already?" asked Monty, and Sixpence nodded.

"Where are the other wives?"

"In the kraals 'round about," said Sixpence. "Them men serving this Charles du Maurier. Some bringing one wife, some none. Some saying him du Maurier liking my wife, him take away."

"Oh, marry 'em all to Cadji and have done with it!" urged Oakes. "Marry 'em all to Cadji, and give 'em each a certificate stamped with Cadji's seal!"

"We'll let the women choose!" said Monty.

Sixpence translated that into the Ronga tongue; and if a bomb had been exploded in their midst those dusky suitors could not have been more astonished. A bird chooses her nest. A pariah dog or a rat may choose which kraal he will infest. But a woman is chosen, to be the chattel of man. There was a new order of things begun that day in Gazaland, whose ultimate culmination, perhaps a century hence, may develop dusky suffragettes and militancy.

Fred Oakes led the ball off like a dancing-master, offering his arm to the senior dame—she with the three offspring. She had not the least idea what he intended—imagined, in fact, at first that she had been spliced to Oakes himself, and was half-pleased, half-embarrassed. Sixpence made matters plain by laying hands on her cow and other loot and shouting the bans of marriage in the shape of a command to all present to stand still and be looked over. Oakes, since she would not take his arm, led her by the hand past all the bucks, pointing out to her in comic pantomime the virtues and probable defects of each.

"Ask this one if he can cook," he ordered, when the woman seemed to hesitate before a more than usually ugly savage.

Sixpence translated. The answer was no, and a roar of laughter followed.

"Him having other cow, bullock, sheep, goat, an' seben wives!" announced Sixpence. "Him rich man. She like him!"

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Oakes led her once again around the circle, but none seemed to please her better than the gruesome-looking giant who stood calmly smoking a clay-pipe, as unembarrassed as the day.

"Bring 'em along!" said Monty. "Let's get this over with."

Monty wrote their names down, and declared them married. Yerkes passed the paper to Cadji, and forced him to affix his seal.

"I am entitled to a fee for doing this!" insisted the Portuguese. "There is no legal document without the corresponding fee! Who shall pay me?"

"Wait and see, sweetheart! Wait and see!" Oakes counseled him.

The marrying and sealing of the paper slips went on, Oakes taking one woman after another around the circle and bringing her hand-in-hand with the buck of her choice to Monty, while the sun rose steadily toward high noon. It grew hot, and the smell of the crowding natives was about intolerable when the last left concubine had picked out for herself the richest buck remaining, and Cadji had unwillingly affixed the legal stamp to Monty's document.

"I go now!" said Cadji, strutting indignantly.

It was his great misfortune, not his fault, that any attempt at dignity only made him look ridiculous. Freckles, yellow skin, gold watch-chain, khaki uniform, brown boots—he was a yellow interrogation mark. He looked about him, forgetting for the moment that his boys were in limbo—hesitated—turned—turned again—and started, baggageless and empty-handed for the gate.

"No, you don't, my saffron proconsul!" Oakes called after him. "Come hither, my Lord Chief Justice!"

Cadji saw fit not to obey, so Fred reached for him with a long, strong arm, took him by the neck, and set him squirming and indignant in front of Monty.

"Awfully sorry to seem pressing, *senhor*, and all that kind of thing, you know," said Monty, with a cheerful eye on the dinner-table Sixpence had begun to construct out of planks and packing-cases. "But we desire your pleasant company at lunch. The last time we let you go you—ah—went in the wrong direction, didn't you? Besides, you have no porters!"

"I need no lunch!" snapped Cadji, his black mustaches bristling. "I eat with no brigands! I go to Chai Chai! I go to Lourenço Marques!"

"I'm just a mite afraid, *senhor*," said Monty, "that you might fall in with Anatole du Maurier on the way. The last surviving member of the Libomba brigands might make you take lunch with him, and that would be too bad; wouldn't it? Take a seat, *senhor*. Lunch is nearly ready. Sixpence, give the *senhor* a chair."

Sixpence produced a chair and thrust the Portuguese down into it with that peculiarly literal understanding the Shangan exerts when it suits him. Cadji affected to collapse under the sense of outrage.

"Now," said Monty, "what do you say, you fellows? Shall we give 'em leave to go and celebrate the weddings?"

"We'll need labor for the gold claims in a day or two," Yerkes reflected.

"Tell 'em to come back in a week," said Oakes.

"Why not keep them here?" said I. "They'll be smelly, but we'll be sure of them."

Nobody agreed with me, however. Yerkes did not like the theory of keeping black or white man in any place without consulting him.

"How about Cadji?" said I.

"Cadji's under contract to us," Yerkes retorted; and that was true.

Monty had no objection to managing the natives' destiny; he simply did not want the trouble of controling them until ready to begin work on the claims down-hill, and Oakes agreed with him.

"Shall I put it to a vote?" asked Monty. "No? Oh, very well. Sixpence—tell them to go. Where? To their kraals. Take the plunder with them. Come back here in a week. Good wages!"

"Them going—not coming back!" objected Sixpence, with a shake of his head.

But if everybody always listened to the voice of experience, the world would be a less alarming place to move about in. Sixpence was abruptly ordered to obey, and presently, at their own disorderly leisure, the natives dispersed through the compound gate and down the zigzag wagon-road.

We ate, under the shade of a wagon-awning stretched on poles, and the meal was excellent. After the fashion of all South African cooks Sixpence had taken unto himself apprentices—youths of the country, naked and unashamed, who did the detail

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work without wage in return for the education.

This left Sixpence free to do every imaginable thing the mind of Monty could devise, and yet not neglect those artistic touches that make the difference between food and victuals. It is the sign of a good cook in that land that he has time and inclination for whatever else demands attention—the hall-mark of a bad one that he refuses to be dissociated from the pots and pans.

WE WERE half-way through the meal when one of our boys came over from the parapet with word that a party had pitched camp some miles away and a white man was approaching.

"Alone?" asked Monty.

"Him an' one black man," said the boy, and returned to the parapet to watch.

Cadji pricked his ears at the news, and Monty smiled at him across the table.

"This will be your expected ally," he said genially. "Eat, *senhor*, and try to look at ease."

"I expect nobody!" said Cadji.

"You saffron hellion!" said Oakes, without the least trace of resentment. "You would rather lie than eat!"

"Never mind," said Monty. "Let's wait and see."

So we continued to eat, all, that is to say, except Cadji, who gnawed his nails. Then we smoked for an hour until Oakes at last pushed his stool back and reached for the concertina. No polite person has any dealings with those instruments, or with such as use them. On Fifth Avenue and in Mayfair one does not know how to distinguish concertina from accordion, and only prays to know nothing about either.

But out in the open, where the kites wheel under an azure sky and the conventions are less self-assertive, when Fred Oakes plays on his machine and sings to it, one has to admit that music is not the only attractive noise. The sounds he makes are something different, inelegant, it is true, but now and then refreshing, if unique. And as he generally makes up songs to suit the random tunes, there is an unexpectedness that robs discord of its sting.

He sang now, with legs spread wide, his neatly bearded face upturned to heaven, and the unholy instrument stretching and collapsing in noisy spasms, between hands likelier for driving drills than coaxing music.

"Oh, who wouldn't be a high court judge
On the coast of Africay?
I've no desire, nor need to drudge;
I've jolly well come to stay!
My court shall sit where dicky-birds flit
Beneath the purple sky,
That I may take for tyranny's sake
Whatever may please my eye!
Bribes I accept with an open palm,
And justice takes her course;
I hang the poor, I rob the rich,
My specialtee's divorce!
When dusky co-respondents come
In fear for their skins and pelf,
I settle the hash with a rawhide lash
And elope with the dames myself!

"Chorus, you fellows!"

"I'm a right respectable, dignified
Illustrious high court judge!
I've skill and a will, but that's not all;
I've a cast-iron, brass-bound, bomb-proof gall
No argument can budge!
The law's my tool, and I'm quite corrupt;
I assure you I'm here to stay,
Till the money's all mine and the banks are rupt
On the coast of Africay!

"How's that, Monty? How's that, Cadji, my saffron Lord Chief Justice? Like it? Listen, there's another verse!"

He was about to begin again when, to Cadji's indescribable relief, a thick-set, big, upstanding man appeared in the middle of the gateway and we all faced toward him. He would have been handsome but for the pouches of fat that hung below his too heavy jaws. The smile on his rather thick lips was arrogant, yet overlaid with a desire to please.

One could guess he had been drilled, although not in recent years, and he carried a rifle German-sportsman style, slung so that the barrel showed perpendicular above one shoulder. He wore a little bunch of hawk's feathers on the side of his brown sun-helmet, and his mustache was of the flowing horse's-tail variety with a tendency to curve upward.

"*Lieb Vaterland!*" said Oakes in an undertone.

"Milwaukee, by the great horn spoon!" said Yerkes.

Monty and I said nothing, but our eyes met as we both looked at Cadji, who was trying to seem un-self-conscious, although with no conspicuous success.

After a moment's hesitation the German left his one black follower outside the gate

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and strode toward us, six-feet-one-or-two of him, swinging along like a great automaton. He was not appreciably blown by the steep ascent, for all his full stomach that was ill concealed by the greenish cotton sporting-coat he wore. It occurred to me that he very carefully avoided Cadji's eyes, as he faced the table and removed his helmet with considerable dignity, bowing slightly to Monty.

"My name is Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff," he announced. "I come to find the Earl of Montdidier."

"Take a chair," said Monty. "I'm Mundidger."

"Pardon me. I asked for the Earl of ——"

"Mundidger," said Monty. "Sit down. That's me."

The German took a chair heavily—with his back toward Cadji, I noticed. The Portuguese looked surprized, yet I thought not disappointed. He seemed to me to be smirking to himself.

"I have been told," said the German, "by informants whose authority is indisputable, that you have pegged off certain gold claims near the foot of this hill."

"What about it?" asked Monty non-committally.

"It is of that matter I would speak with you."

"Go ahead!" said Monty, and we all sat back and lit our pipes—I in order to get a better look at the German from between my hands.

There were pouches under his eyes that suggested animality, but there was nothing particularly furtive in his glance—in fact, rather the contrary. He met our eyes, if anything, too boldly.

"What I have to say, Lord Mun——"

"Mundidger."

"Lord Mundidger, is of a confidential nature. It would be correct to dismiss such of your party as are not of the first standing."

"Thank you," said Monty dryly. "I like to be told what to do!"

"Stick Cadji in the water-butt!" said Oakes, and the Portuguese bridled like a hen in a high wind.

"Sixpence!" called Monty. "Take Senhor Cadji out of ear-shot. See no harm comes to him! Bring him back here when I call!"

The enormous, hideous Shangan beckoned, and the German laughed aloud as Cadji obeyed. Sixpence herded the high court judge with emotions mixed of equal parts pride and nervousness, that in no way interfered with his obvious intention not to let his charge escape. Cadji seemed strangely meek and unindignant.

"Do you mean that these white men are to hear what I have to say?" asked Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff.

"If you've anything to say to me these are my friends," answered Monty.

"But what I have to say is of the highest significance!"

"Cough it up!" said Oakes, fingering the concertina.

He looked ready to burst into opprobrious song, but Monty caught his eye.

"*Hrrrrumph!*" said the German pompously. "My information is not such as to be coughed up! One does not talk of world-matters to the world at large."

"Suit yourself, of course," drawled Monty. "Who are these other men?"

"Make a noise like a Wienerwurst sandwich, America, and put him at ease!" said Oakes.

"They're my friends," repeated Monty, and introduced us each by name.

The German bowed abruptly to us in turn, standing with heels together, and we annoyed him awfully by remaining in our seats.

"Now," said Monty. "Suppose we hear the news."

"The news is that you have destroyed the du Maurier gang," said the German. "The important fact is that I am commercial attaché to the Imperial German consulate in Lourenço Marques."

He said that as if it should carry profound weight, and was visibly disappointed by our obvious lack of interest—imitated in my case from Monty, whom I was watching minutely.

"Never heard of you," said Monty.

"Didn't know your nation had a consulate!" lied Oakes, with a twinkle in his eye.

"YOU did not know that?" said Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff. "Then you have much to learn! The largest consulate in Lourenço Marques is the German consulate, also having the greatest number of officials and attachés, of whom I have the honor to be not the least. The largest club in Lourenço Marques is also German. The greatest number of merchants other than Portuguese is German.

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The most money in Lourenço Marques is controlled by German interests. The import trade from Germany into Lourenço Marques already is colossal, and is daily growing. Germany has indisputably large interests in this part of Africa."

"Very important, I'm sure," murmured Monty.

"The colonial Government is so corrupt," the German went on, "that it keeps no secrets. I, for instance, became at once aware of the agreement made between you and the governor of Gazaland, that you should have title to these valuable gold claims, and to certain rubber concessions elsewhere, in return for ridding these hills of the outlaw du Maurier gang."

"What of it?" demanded Yerkes. "What of it, Heine? What the —— has it got to do with you?"

"This!" said the German, facing him and showing strong teeth in a smile like a woodchuck's. "The Portuguese Government of this colony is so corrupt it can not govern. The outlaws ruled these hills for years. Theirs was the government of these hills *de facto*. You, having overcome the outlaws, are until some other evolution shall occur the Government of these Libomba Hills!"

Oakes squealed with suppressed delight, and Yerkes laughed aloud, but Monty frowned them into silence.

"I don't see your point yet," he said.

"I arrive at the point," said Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff. "In my unofficial capacity of private representative of certain German high financial interests, I made an agreement with these du Mauriers before ever you came on the scene, conceding those alluvial gold deposits to me. The agreement was not registered with the Portugese Government, on the ground that an impotent Government has no authority. But, you see, I am both official and unofficial. In my official capacity it has been my duty to have the agreement registered among the archives at the Imperial German consulate."

"I suppose your Imperial German consul is accredited to the—ah—impotent Government?" asked Monty.

"Of course!" laughed the German. "There are certain fictions we all subscribe to for the sake of appearances!"

"I'm still waiting for the point," said Monty.

"I arrive at it," said Muehlendorff.

"Point — joint—anoint—disappoint—" Oakes muttered.

A song was being born—doubtless irreverent, and very sharp. But it died stillborn in response to Monty's frown.

"By coming up here when you did," said Muehlendorff, "you stole a march on me. You see, I am perfectly frank. Two days after you left Lourenço Marques, the money reached me with which to pay these du Mauriers for the gold concession."

"How much money?" demanded Yerkes, like a sprung trap.

"Ten thousand pounds," said the German.

"I don't believe a word of it!" smiled Oakes.

"Pounds English?" I asked, but Monty said nothing.

"Gold!" said the German. "Gold in the Standard Bank in Lourenço Marques!"

"I still don't see the point," said Monty, yawning.

"The Imperial German Government is disposed to support the commercial claims of its subjects in this or any other foreign country," said Muehlendorff, "whereas it is no secret that your Government, Lord Mun——"

"Mundidger."

"Your Government, Lord Mundidger, never backs up its subjects unless compelled! As for the United States—" he looked hard at Yerkes— "the United States has utterly no influence in Africa!"

"I imagine you're scouting for trouble, Heine!" said Yerkes with a dry grin. "Ignorance can't hurt me! Carry on!"

Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff chose to ignore the remark.

"My present purpose," he said, "is to establish valid and valuable claims in this country, in my unofficial capacity of commercial representative of those great financial interests at which I hinted. I am willing—" he faced Monty and looked hard in his eyes —"to pay to you the ten thousand pounds for a transfer to me of your claim to the whole property formerly claimed and controlled by Charles du Maurier."

"The devil you are!" said Monty.

"There is no devil about it," said the German. "The gold is in the Standard Bank, and is yours for your signature!"

"You mean you've brought a contract with you?" Monty began to seem interested.

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The German drew a single sheet of foolscap from his inner pocket and tossed it on the table.

"It is simple. It is all written on that. There are no deceptions—no riders—no evasions. Ten thousand pounds in gold, in return for your transfer to me of the du Maurier estate."

"Leave it with me. We'll consider it after you've gone," said Monty.

Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff looked surprized.

"Perhaps I would better call attention to some circumstances," he said, and the tone of his voice took on a subtly triumphant note.

"Say anything you like, as long as it's polite," answered Monty, yawning again.

"Bear me witness, I approached you politely! But observe—this camp—this fort—this hill-top—this outlaw's nest is of no use from a defensive standpoint. The sides of the hill are steep, but climbable. It would need a large force to defend the place, and there are but four of you. In my camp I have two hundred men, many of them armed, and all led by Germans!"

"You mean you propose to drive us out?" asked Monty.

"Shove him in the water-butt!" urged Oakes.

"I thought we'd see your teeth presently!" said Yerkes. "Attack and be —— to you!"

But it was perfectly obvious that, if it were true he had two hundred armed men with German leaders, then he could take the fort when he so chose. He would lose a lot of men, of course, if we defended it, but the conclusion would be foregone. The place never had been put in a state of defence. Charles du Maurier's purpose in choosing it had been to overlook all trails, and have plenty of time in which to run or get ready a flank attack should he descry an enemy.

"Of course I intend no violence," said Muehlendorff. "I only mentioned——"

"Then why mention it?" asked Monty very bluntly.

"Let me present to you some other aspects of the situation," said the German. "I have—not in my pocket, but in safe keeping in my camp below there—certain slips of paper signed by you, and bearing the Portuguese high court seal. I bought them from the natives to whom you gave them an hour or two ago! For the moment let us pass by the peculiar circumstance of Lord Montdidier's signature appearing on any such document!

"Certain of the slips purport to be the marriage certificates of certain women. Those women were the wives of Charles du Maurier. Charles du Maurier claimed title to all these lands by virtue of the old Portuguese law, under which the lands of a chief pass at his death to any white man who may have married one of the chief's daughters. The claim might be made that the lands reverted to the women on Charles du Maurier's death. I might purchase the title from the men to whom you claim to have legally married the women! They are in my camp, and can not get away!"

"Let's hang him!" said Yerkes.

"Hang him and Cadji from one tree!" Oakes seconded.

"Excuse me," said the German, promptly and pleasantly. "My Government will hold to strict accountability whoever assaults my person, as well as the Government permitting such assault!"

"You've some more up your sleeve," said Monty. "Out with it, and save time!"

"You could not work these claims without laborers. It happens that in my semi-official capacity I have received authority to visit the chiefs in this district for ethnological research. I am in position to exercise such pressure as will prevent the chiefs from sending you laborers."

MONTY was fingering the sheet of foolscap that the German had thrown between them. I noticed that he had read it without seeming to.

"How much does Cadji know about this?" he demanded.

The German laughed.

"Why trouble about him?" he sneered.

"How much does he know?" asked Monty.

"It was he," said Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff, "who interviewed Charles du Maurier on my account, and arranged the terms. He is a mere intermediary. What of him? He is nothing! So!" He snapped his fingers. "He expects a commission from me, and doubtless he demanded a big one from the du Mauriers. But the du Mauriers are dead, and I am dealing with you in person. Let us forget Cadji!"

"What else?" asked Monty, with a sort of abrupt directness that went straight to the mark.

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Whatever Yerkes might say—and he said a lot of it very often—about the British aristocracy being a shameless anachronism, there was no denying Monty's ability to command respect. He could draw fire by dint of sheer assumption of superiority, just as easily as he could subdue wrath by his gentle manners. The German, nothing loath when it came to boasting, seized the bait instantly.

"Ha! *Kreutz-Donnerwetter!* You have perspicacity! You perceive that I would not approach you without having first every individual trump card in my hand! That is so! I have them all! Every one, *meine Herren!* I have Anatole du Maurier—ha-ha! The last of the family—the one who alone had any brains—the cousin of Charles—he whom you failed to kill last night—he is in my camp! He expects to make terms with me! Why do I not deal with him? Because you are in possession, and he not! But—make note of it—he remains to make agreements with, should you fail to be amenable!"

"And that's your whole case, is it?" asked Monty.

"That is my case," said the German. "You have until four this afternoon in which to answer!"

"Failing which?" suggested Monty.

"I shall act!"

Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff replaced a gold watch in the pocket of his ample vest, and rose.

"I will remain out of ear-shot until you make up your minds!" he said condescendingly.

"Take a tip," said Fred, "and keep out of sight, too!"

"Heine," said Yerkes, "be advised, and beat it!"

I had never seen Yerkes so savagely self-restrained. The German caught the war note in his voice and eyed him captiously.

"I am not afraid of all four of you!" he said.

Yerkes half-rose to his feet, but Monty glanced at his wrist-watch and intervened.

"Give you just two minutes, Herr von Whats'yourname," he said, "to get out of this compound. Stay longer at your own risk! Return at four for your answer if you care to. Good afternoon!"

The German saluted him with a sardonic smile, and a flourish of the hand that was the very peak of insolence.

"Ten thousand pounds by check on the Standard Bank at four o'clock, or nothing—except trouble!" he sneered, turning on his heel.

We watched him swagger out of the compound, with feelings that in my case were unmixed. I could guess what the others thought more or less by their faces, and was surprized to see Monty calm and apparently free from any symptom of resentment.

"This contract he wants us to sign," he said, "is peculiar, under the circumstances. Sixpence!"

The Shangan came at a run, dragging Cadji with him, the little short-legged Portuguese objecting savagely to the indignity of being fetched.

"*Baas?*"

"Leave Senhor Cadji here. Place two boys where they can watch where that German goes, and report to me. Then come back here."

Sixpence allowed a great grin of comprehension to spread across his flattened physiognomy, made a sort of semi-apologetic grimace at Cadji—for the color-line means more even to the black man than the white—and vanished.

"There's a chance, Senhor Cadji," said Monty, "that your knowledge of law, your experience of Governmental conditions, and all that kind of thing, may—ah—possibly provide you with an avenue of return to our good graces."

The Portuguese looked unpleasant—entirely unwilling to believe us capable of either grace or goodness.

"Take a seat," said Monty. "Look that over, please."

He passed him the sheet of foolscap the German had left on the table.

"What comment occurs to you to make on that?"

The Portuguese frowned over the document, reading it swiftly, considering it slowly, and passing it back. Monty passed it on for us to read in turn.

"It is a joke contract!" said Cadji, with a huge shrug of his shoulders. "It is illegal! It is in fact no contract, *senhores!* It bears no stamps—it——"

"They could affix German stamps at the consulate," said Monty.

"It makes no mention of your agreement with our Government!" said Cadji. "It calls for a transfer of rights that never did exist and that, supposing them ever to have

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existed, were taken by you by force from men who stole them! A court of law would laugh at it! It is beneath all argument! It is—what shall I say—it is *opera bouffe!*"

"He seems disinclined to deal with your Government, doesn't he?" said Monty. "We having bought the right to prospect here, and title having been promised to us—and he knew about that of course—I suppose he thought it would be no use offering money to the Government."

Cadji shrugged his shoulders.

"Whoever offers money to my Government, *senhores*, will find no hesitation about acceptance! The right to prospect in this district has been sold half a dozen times in my day! It will be sold again, when you are dead or gone away!"

"But why—" Monty's level brows were knitted into a puzzled knot—"why doesn't he offer to buy from us our contract with the Portuguese Government, that conceivably has some value? You see what he says there, you fellows? He asks us to sell for ten thousand pounds rights acquired by us from the du Mauriers—all rights acquired from the du Mauriers, I think it reads, with no mention as to how we came by them, or when."

"By thunder!" said Yerkes, leaning back in his chair and putting one heel on the table. "I'd send that piece of paper to the British consulate, and await results if I were you!"

"I rather suspect it might arrive too late," said Monty.

Oakes squealed.

"Chess!" he said. "Chess!"

"Yes," admitted Monty. "Chess, I think! Senhor Cadji, you don't forget, I hope, that you hold a ten per cent. interest in our property."

"I am aware of it!" said Cadji, brightening up. "Ten per cent. of ten thousand is a thousand pounds!"

"But, by ——, you shall earn it before you're paid!" said Monty. "You've played us fast and loose in every conceivable way! You sold us to the du Mauriers before this expedition started. You'd sell us to Heinrich von What'shisname if you thought you could make eleven hundred by it. Listen to me now, and remember I'm not joking! When you left Lourenço Marques—" he leaned over the table, strong, dark, and handsome, and his dark eyes seemed to surprize Cadji's thoughts before he could cover them—"were there any unusual political conditions there? Speak!"

Cadji shrugged his shoulders.

"Political conditions?" he said. "They are never what you would call usual. Myself, I am a monarchist. I am for *statu quo*. I am against upheavals of the body politic, which make always for uncertainty."

"Then there are anti-monarchists?" demanded Monty.

"*Senhor*, there is a very strong undercurrent of republican sentiment in all Portuguese colonies—unhappily in this one also. It meets with my disapproval. Yes, there is republican feeling."

"What else?" demanded Monty, and the Portuguese hesitated.

"It is not proper to discuss the secrets of my Government!" he answered.

"They're no longer secrets if you know them, and if you know them they're for sale!" said Yerkes pointedly.

"Bravo, America!" roared Oakes, thumping him on the back.

"Would you fellows mind keeping quiet a minute?" asked Monty impatiently. "Now, Senhor Cadji. Ten per cent. of ten thousand pounds, as well as ten per cent. of any future profits according to agreement—or out of the compound you go this minute after the German! Choose!"

CADJI hesitated. It looked as if our terms, although tempting, were not enormously better than what he hoped he might perhaps exact from Muehlendorff. Besides, to the convinced corruptionist a bird in the bush looks twice as good as any in the hand.

"And take your chance of reaching the German alive," added Oakes, with a meaning glance at Sixpence and a rifle.

"We'd duck you again, of course," said Yerkes.

"And then tar and feather you," said I.

"But we'll let you go to Heine if you'd rather," Yerkes added.

"Time's passing," said Monty, and Cadji made up his mind.

"*Senhores*, there is a feeling among monarchists that—perhaps—who knows?—another monarch—a change of monarchs—might be better."

"You mean revolution?" asked Yerkes.

"Shut up, America!" Oakes thumped him in the ribs and upset him, chair and all. "Go on, Monty!"

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"It is those who favor a republic who would bring on revolution," Cadji answered. "Monarchists are against all forms of revolution. We prefer—what should I say?—a *coup d'état.*"

Yerkes, reaching under the table, grabbed Monty's folded chess-board, resumed his seat, and opened it.

"Chess!" he said. "Me for the chess! I don't understand a word. Monty's chessmen may shed light."

He moved a yellow knight to the center of the board.

"Call that one Cadji. Here's Heine von Deutschland."

He moved a rook.

"Take Heine's money—sign the paper—kick Cadji—move down to the claims that belong to us—let Heine take this place that belonged more or less to du Maurier—it begins to look simple to me! *Coup d'état?* What's a *coup d'état* got to do with it?"

Oakes had his foot against Yerkes' chair-leg. At a sign of impatience from Monty he shoved with all his might, and for the second time within two minutes Bill went headlong.

"The *senhores* play the tomfool rather than listen!" sneered Cadji.

The little man's nerves were on edge, what with fear, and intrigue, and the rough handling he had had.

"Never mind them!" said Monty. "Talk to me."

"*Senhor*—my lord—it will make no difference. Should that *coup d'état* take place, or should it not, the Government will certainly dispute von Muehlendorff's claims under that contract, should you sign it! My advice is—sign, and receive the money!"

Monty nodded, looking puzzled. Watching from one side as I was, with the Portuguese silhouetted against the wagon-flap, I had a chance to see the best of the game. It seemed to me he was in league in some way with the German, although willing to betray him too if worth his while; but from the sudden look of sly satisfaction that crossed his face, I thought he now saw a way of cheating both sides. I tried to signal to Monty, but he did not catch my eye. Cadji leaned toward him and suddenly spoke very earnestly.

"*Senhor*—my lord—you will surely pay me the thousand pounds?"

Monty laughed, but did not answer.

"When will you pay it?"

"Whenever we present the German's check at the bank in Lourenço Marques."

"That is sufficient for me! That is the word of an English gentleman—of an English lord, who is even better than a gentleman! Now listen to me, *senhor!* Pay me that money, and I will pay you further ten thousand pounds, less ten per cent. for my commission! Sign that contract with the German—sign it—sign it! Come with me to Lourenço Marques. I know a syndicate of rich Portuguese merchants who will instantly purchase your real rights for ten thousand pounds! Sell the false, so-called rights that he asks for, to the German. Sell the real rights, for which you have contract from the present Government to my syndicate!"

"What d'you mean by present Government?" demanded Monty.

The Portuguese hesitated.

"Did I say present Government? It was a slip of the tongue. I meant Government, *senhor!*"

Monty turned to us.

"Have you heard, you fellows? What do you say? He proposes that we sell to the German for ten thousand pounds, and again to some Portuguese for another ten."

"The whole thing's a swindle. I say no!" said Yerkes. "To —— with him!"

Fred looked at Monty, and then at Yerkes with an eye that twinkled.

"I vote with Yerkes," he grinned.

It would have been wiser for me to hold my tongue. I had not made my mind up, but suspected there was some third course not yet obvious.

"All right," I said. "I vote no, too."

"I vote aye!" said Monty dryly. "Three noes to one aye. The ayes have it! *Senhor,*" he said, pushing paper and pencil toward the Portuguese, "do you write German? Just scribble a line to von Muehlendorff asking him to come at once."

And he got up and walked away.

Yerkes fairly gasped, and Oakes roared with laughter. Cadji wrote on the paper with a contemptuous back toward them both.

"America," said Oakes, fingering his concertina, "I wouldn't have voted against you for a million! I'll vote your way every time, for a sight of your sweet face when Monty turns the trick. You bally ass! Haven't you realized Monty'll lead from whichever hand suits him as long as the lead's his?"

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"Then what in —— did he put the vote for?" demanded Yerkes. "Is he the Kaiser?"

"He might like to know what you were thinking, sweetheart! D'you think he'd ask if he didn't care?"

Cadji folded the paper up and addressed it on the outside to von Muehlendorff.

"Who shall take this?" he demanded.

"I'll sign it first," said Oakes, and reached for it.

"No need," said Cadji. "It is signed already."

Oakes still had his hand out. He and I were facing one way and could both see Monty talking to Sixpence fifty yards away. Monty shook his head violently, and signaled with his hand.

"Oh, very well," said Oakes, and I thought that Cadji smiled.

Sixpence crossed over, took the note from Cadji, and went off with it through the gate, followed by another boy. Presently I saw the boy come back to Monty, who turned his back toward us. After a minute the boy hurried back through the gate again. Oakes undid the clasp of his concertina, tried a dozen haphazard chords, chanced on one that suited him, and sang:

"Consider the brass on the ruddy recruit!
Oh, watch him stand easy, and see him salute!
With the King's Regulations to tell him his rights
He's a barrack-room lawyer, and worse—till he fights!
Oh, but then what a change! You may tread on him then!
Your recruit becomes human—his officers men—
And it's "Stand on my neck, sir!" Oh, anything goes
When the guns are unlimbered and men are at blows!

"Behold the slick voter with topper and cane;
The ballot's his god—good advice is his bane!
Oh, he'll down with the best, and he'll up with the worst,
Putting principle last, and his pocketbook first!
But it's otherwise quite when political schemes
Have corrupted and busted the peace of his dreams;
Then he shouts for dictators! "To —— with the polls!"
One pilot he wants who can steer by the shoals!

"And consider the chief, of priority proud,
How he flaunts a blue ribbon and marshals the crowd;
For ways he's a stickler, on form he insists,
He denounces as damned any rough who resists!
Oh, the route and the time he lays down in advance—
How the banners shall wave and the hired horses prance;
But his pains are all wasted, his tyranny vain—
The procession won't march in the rain—in the rain!"

"It's not often I moralize, America, but the devil drives me now and then! Monty's a democrat when you catch him napping—which is about every third Tuesday in Lent of alternate leap-years! I'm worse than Monty!"

MONTY strolled back toward the table casually, and we went to meet him, for Cadji showed a disposition to "listen in," growing alert and attentive; but he could scarcely summon courage to get up and follow us.

"What d'you suppose Cadji wrote in his note to the German?" Monty asked.

" 'All is over between us. I enclose the diamond ring!' " Oakes hazarded.

" 'I have persuaded them. Ten per cent. commission! Come!' " Monty answered.

"Playing both ways from the middle, eh?" said Yerkes.

We strolled together toward the parapet, climbed it, and stood looking over the plain, all blue with haze, blotched here and there with thatch-roofed native kraals. About five miles away we could see the camp the German had pitched, and it looked not at all unlikely there were at least the two hundred more-or-less-armed men of whom he boasted.

Semi-official members of consulates are able to travel in great style in lands where the Government lacks grip. But he had not returned to his camp. Through Monty's glasses I could see him at the foot of our hill, waiting for the answer he doubtless considered inevitable.

With a glance over his shoulder to make sure Cadji was not within hearing, Monty took us more or less into confidence—in his usual way, without prelude or apology.

"As Oakes said, there's chess here! There's an obvious intent to pick a quarrel with the Portuguese Government!"

"I get you!" said Yerkes. "If Heine really wanted title to our claims, he'd offer to buy our contract with the governor."

"Whereas," said Monty, "he particularly avoids that, although well aware of its existence. Without suspecting it, we have——"

"Sat into a crooked game," said Yerkes.

"Von Muehlendorff dealt in the first instance with the du Mauriers," said Monty. "He admits it. He would never have offered to deal with us, even although we've

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destroyed the du Mauriers, unless he were in something of a hurry."

"Rot! He has the last-left du Maurier with him," objected Oakes.

"But not the du Maurier who owned this hill and was bully of the Libombas," answered Monty. "He probably prefers our simplicity to Anatole du Maurier's probable treachery. Anatole's only a poor reserve in case of accident. Oh, I don't doubt he's in a hurry."

"But why—for what?" I asked, utterly puzzled. "If he wants our claims, why not offer to buy them in the ordinary way?"

"He doesn't care a rap for the claims," said Monty.

"Very well," I objected. "Why throw away ten thousand pounds? That's quite a sum of money!"

"For him personally—yes," admitted Monty.

"Then you mean the financial interests he says he represents——"

"Financial jackanapes!" said Monty. "Yerkes had the right idea—see the British consul—see him quickly. D'you recall what von What'shisname said about 'world affairs' not being talked of 'to the world at large'? It's funny, but in all my acquaintance with Germans I've never yet known one who didn't give his own game away—usually through self-importance!" He turned so as to face us three. "By the way, you fellows, I'd like a vote on this."

Yerkes laughed outright.

"Why not have us vote first, and tell us what it's about afterward?"

"This is a question of individual rights," said Monty, perfectly unruffled. "We've got to be unanimous on this or the proposal drops. Do you fellows consider twenty thousand pounds a fair price for our property below there?"

"Sure!" said Yerkes.

"At that price I'm willing to throw in all the malaria—the stink from the swamps—the snakes—the flies—the mosquitos—and a blessing!" said Oakes.

As my share under the partnership agreement would be one-third of a half of that, and never having seen as much as three thousand pounds in one lump in my life, I naturally hesitated. The words would not come.

"Y-yes!" I stammered. "C-certainly!"

"All the same," said Yerkes, "I'd hate to feel that a threatening hog like Heine had put one over on us!"

"But suppose it's the other way 'round, and we fool him?" said Monty.

"Deal me in!" said Yerkes.

There and then we all agreed on twenty thousand pounds as our selling price, but none except Monty saw as much as the next step toward obtaining it.

We went back and amused Cadji by playing football with a bundle of old rope, and him for the unwilling goal, until the German put in an appearance and stalked toward us with a sort of businesslike commercial air.

"So we are agreed?" he said, with helmet off and outstretched hand.

"We'll sell," said Monty, failing to see the strong, thick paw.

"I will write you a check," said the German. But the check he drew from his pocket was already filled out, except for the signature. He sat at the table and wrote his name with a flourish—waved the check in the air to dry it—and pushed it across the table toward Monty. Monty let it lie.

"Now for your signature on the contract! I prefer that all four shall sign!" he said.

"We'll sign when we've cashed that check," said Monty blandly.

The German spluttered indignantly.

"It is unheard of," he asserted, "that the signature on a check of an attaché of the Imperial German consulate should be questioned by any one!"

"*Senhores*," said Cadji in an awe-struck voice, "that check is good! Accept it! How shall an attaché of the Imperial German consulate refuse to recognize his own signature? How can the Standard Bank refuse to pay?"

"Couldn't say, I'm sure," said Monty.

Yerkes rubbed his forefinger and thumb together under Cadji's nose.

"Cash!" he said simply.

"But I will guarantee the check!" said Cadji, and excepting Monty we all laughed—even von Muehlendorff.

"Very well," said the German with a shrug of his shoulders. "It is all the same to me. I intend to return at once to Lourenço Marques. Come with me and receive the money!"

"Sure!" sneered Yerkes. "And leave your blackguards below there to occupy this place unopposed! We're simple, we are!"

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Monty turned to Cadji. "Will you witness the signature on that check?" he asked and Cadji nodded.

"Will you stamp your official seal on it?"

"Certainly!" said Cadji.

"Do it!" said Monty; and Cadji obeyed.

"Now if you care to give me the check, we'll go to Lourenço Marques," said Monty. "And when we have the money for it, Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff, we will all four sign that paper!"

"Good!" said the German. "I am satisfied!"

And he certainly looked it.

Monty pocketed the check, and the German rose to go.

"There is beer in my camp," he remarked affably.

"The deuce there is," said Monty.

"Whisky also," said the German.

"You don't mean it!"

"And cigars—imported—from Habana."

"Ah!"

"Will you come?"

"Meet you at our hotel," said Monty. "If you propose to reach Lourenço Marques ahead of us you'll have to travel fast! Good afternoon!"

"What do you mean?" the German demanded. "You must come with me! You must travel with me!"

"Not in the bargain," said Monty. "Meet you at our hotel! Here—have the check back if you like!"

Cadji gasped as Monty drew it from his pocket.

"No!" said the German. "No! I am satisfied. That check has been witnessed. It bears a high court seal. Senhor Cadji knows its purpose. I am content. Besides—the English nobility are well known for honorable dealing. I have no fear you will not keep your bargain."

"Very well, then," said Monty, and the German saluted stiffly, Monty acknowledging it without emphasis.

"BEGINS to look like taking candy from a kid," said Yerkes with glee in his voice.

"But which kid?" said Monty.

And none of us answered. I am sure none of us understood.

"Now then, you fellows!" he said. "Let's shake a leg! The German will go by Chai Chai and the steamer down the Limpopo. He'll probably start at dawn, and won't waste time. We've got to pack, and clear out tonight!"

"*Senhores*, I will not travel at night!" said Cadji. "It is not safe! There are lions! There are disaffected natives! There is malaria! There are mosquitoes! If you do not go by way of Chai Chai you must follow the swamps, and they are impossible!"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Oakes, whose former journey across the swamps was such as none of us were likely to forget.

Monty ignored them both.

"There's a way down the Tembe River! Charles du Maurier had barges on the Tembe somewhere. He persuaded a Frenchman to put up the money to build them in Lourenço Marques. They loaded them with corn, to trade to the natives in famine time, and towed them up to the nearest point to this place. Charles du Maurier shot the Frenchman as soon as the journey was done, and the barges lie nose to the bank in a backwater—or so I'm told. I'm going to find them!"

"In the dark?" I wondered.

"I will not travel in the dark!" insisted Cadji.

"It'll be daylight when we get there!" answered Monty. "Now, you fellows—pack!"

Most of our loads had been made ready the night before under Monty's orders, in case disaster to us should have necessitated flight when the robbers attacked. It did not take very long to overhaul them, and make the rest ready.

We got the mules out of the shed and set boys to grooming them; they had had a good long rest, and were fit to march furiously. Everything was in order some time before sunset; and as the sun went down beyond the western rim of the parapet we put the unwilling Cadji on a mule and filed out of the gate, with Sixpence leading, carrying an unlit lantern slung over his shoulder on a pole.

I rode last to prick along the stragglers, and had no trouble yet, for there would be a pay-day when we should reach Lourenço Marques and the loaded boys marched with a will.

But the cows that had been our boys' share of the du Maurier loot very soon began upsetting calculations. They objected to traveling at night—were scared by every deep shadow, and of every jackal's whimper

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—prone to stampede, and willing to go any way but forward. We had not more than descended the steep, zigzag wagon-road and started to march 'round the foot of the hill to place a sheltering spur between us and the German's camp—we could see his lights glimmering in the distance—than our procession was thrown into disorder; and every effort to remedy matters only made it worse.

Monty rode up and down the length of the line in a fury, threatening to have the cows butchered unless their owners could keep them controlled. Yerkes made a gallant effort to act cowboy, on a mule that would neither wheel nor gallop. Cadji piped incessantly about the madness that impelled us to try to march in the dark.

At last a lion roared in the distance, and the cows became utterly bereft of reason. But for a little disused thorn corral we came on, long abandoned by its native owners and none too well preserved, we should doubtless have lost every one of them.

And if that had happened, nothing was more likely than that our boys would have refused to march until dawn should give them a chance of rounding up what lions and jackals might have left alive. Monty called a halt, and we drove the frantic, foolish beasts into the enclosure.

"If we only had thought of bringing rawhide reams with us!" he said to me. "We could lash them two by two to a chain or a long pole. They couldn't get away from us then."

"I could go back and get the reams and chains from one or two of Charles du Maurier's wagons," I said.

"I wish you would," he answered. Take half a dozen boys with you. Take Sixpence if you like. We shall have to wait here till you catch us up, so hurry!"

We had come further than I thought, and the journey back to the foot of the hill took an interminable time. Half-way up the hill I decided to leave my mule with one of the boys and clamber the rest of the way on foot. Being no horseman, the angle the mule's back made, and his awkward efforts, made me prefer Shanks' mare.

I was ashamed of admitting even to myself that I was a quitter, and made a fuss of pretending the mule was lame, which I suspect did not deceive Sixpence for a moment; but I made him hunt about for a level place and, when he found one at last behind a great rock ten yards to one side of the track, I left the mule there with one of the boys to guard him. It turned out to be a stroke of rare good fortune that I did so.

Sixpence hurried on ahead of me, his black body and dingy blanket part of the night, and his accustomed sinews making nothing of the steep ascent. It was his sharp eyes that saved me from walking straight into a trap. He came hurrying back, silent as a shadow, gesticulating, signaling, doing everything but shout to put me on guard. The other boys lay flat at once wherever it was darkest, and I followed suit.

"Him Anatole," said Sixpence, panting as he crouched in the shadow beside me, "him German, an' many black man—many guns—all up there!"

I lay still and thought the matter out, seeing but one solution of it, and one course to take. We were not very far from the top, and as we all kept silence I heard voices. Men were talking English near the gate. Trying to catch the words was like fishing for something you could see, with a line so short that the hook would scarcely touch—exasperating. I crawled forward, whispering to Sixpence to stay with the others where he was—another stroke of luck. My star was in the ascendant that night.

I crawled carefully, and dare say could not have been heard from a yard away, but my movements made just sufficient noise to increase the difficulty of hearing, and I went up very close to the gate before lying flat at last in the deepest shadow I could find. Then my own heart beat so loud that I seemed for the moment worse off than ever. A singing in my ears made matters worse. But presently I heard footfalls, and saw the figures of two men loom black in the midst of the open gate.

"You must suit yourself," said one of them, and I recognized the voice of von Muehlendorff. "As I told you I will deal with you when you can prove yourself to be the man with whom I should deal! I have helped you. What more can I do?"

"——!" growled the other man. "If I had caught the —— swine napping as you said I could, their throats would be cut by now!"

"In that case I would now be dealing with you instead of them!" said the German.

"You fooled me!" growled the other

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voice. "You sent me up here on a blind errand!"

"Nonsense!" answered the German, not in the least alarmed, if his voice was any criterion. "They have marched sooner than I thought they would, that is all. You can catch them, can't you? Have you no legs? No courage?"

"Bah! What is the use? If I had caught them here I could have cut all their throats. On the march perhaps I can kill one or two —perhaps not. What is the use?"

"Listen!" said the German, "and don't be a cry-baby!"

"Cry-baby!" snarled the voice. "I'll drink blood tonight! That's the kind of baby I am!"

"Good! Then get on their trail. If you can kill the tall one—him they call Lord Mundidger—Monty—my check is made out in his name, and the others won't have sense enough to do anything—kill him and bring me proof of it, I'll deal with you. I'll buy title from you then. But you'll have to be quick!"

"Give me some more men!" the voice growled. "Give me a pair of your Germans and six more rifles!"

"NO," SAID von Muehlendorff. "Germans must not be mixed in this, and you have guns enough. My other guns are German-made, and might get us all into trouble. Their natives are unarmed. Your ten men are plenty. Even if they shoot wildly and hit nothing, they will cause a stampede. Your rifle will do the real work. My advice to you is, follow them, and get close! Shoot when you get the chance. Shoot them all if you can—never mind their porters—but shoot that man Monty in any case! If you fail, you needn't look for sympathy from me! I don't do business with failures! If you fail I shall deal with them, and you may go to the devil!"

"To the devil, eh?" the voice growled.

"To the devil!" said the German.

"The devil, eh? You don't know who the devil is! I, Anatole du Maurier am the devil! My heart is hell—hell I tell you! What do I care for you? My brothers—my cousins—my nephews—they are dead—all dead—blown to the devil by that pack of blasted Englishmen! My family is all gone to the devil!

"I am alone! I will get them! I will get them! I will cut out their livers! I will bring their livers to you tomorrow at dawn, all warm and bloody! I will squeeze their livers like a sponge with my fingers thus before your tent. And you shall give me the ten thousand pounds, or I will kill you! Go! Get along! Leave me alone! My breast burns! Go, I tell you!"

"Thank you," said the German. "You go first. I prefer to walk behind."

"You first!" growled Anatole.

"No," said the German. "If you care to send your men down first I will walk beside you."

Anatole whistled, and a number of black shapes took form in the night beside him. He said something to them, and in twos, each with a rifle, his gang of natives started down-hill, I praying they might not fall foul of Sixpence and my unarmed contingent.

Then the German and Anatole du Maurier started to walk side by side, Anatole on the side of the track nearest me. In ten strides they were within a yard of me, and I lay crouched as if the very strain of thew and muscle would make me more invisible. They did not see me. They did not suspect me.

In another stride they would have passed when Anatole set his clumsily shod foot unwarily on a loose stone, twisted his ankle, sidestepped to get back his balance, and trod hard on the back of my hand.

"Snakes!" he yelled, jumping a yard high, and coming down with both feet and all his weight on my shoulders.

"——, no! It's a man!"

The pain in my hand was excruciating. I was on my knees in a second and the effort threw Anatole on to his back. The German fired a pistol five times in swift succession, the flash showing me each time, and each shot missing me by smaller margin.

By that time Anatole was on his feet again and the German decided to leave me to his mercy and ran back through the gate. Anatole raised his rifle and aimed at me. I rushed in under it, and closed with him, feeling his ribs crack as I used my whole strength. And that same second I heard several shots ring out on the road below. Sixpence had joined battle with the riflemen!

My fight with Anatole was short and swift. He clubbed his rifle short and tried to brain me, but I drove my head in under his chin and the blows rained less and less heavily on my shoulder. I forced his head back so

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far that he dropped the rifle and used both hands to wrench and tear at my face.

He was gaining nothing by that, but was doing damage, so I stepped swiftly and changed the grip, getting my right arm over his throat and under his armpit. So we swayed for a minute, he kicking savagely at my shins, and I using all my strength to break his thick neck if I could.

I felt him reach for my eye with the thumb of his left hand, and not being minded to go through the rest of this existence one-eyed put out a terrific effort. The agony of the pressure on his throat frenzied him and be burst free. I swung back and landed with my left fist and all my strength and weight below his breastbone.

He reeled—tottered—staggered—lost his balance—and fell backward over the edge of the road. I could not see, but I remembered that the least drop near that place was a matter of thirty feet, with broken rock to fall on, and I wasted no time wishing him farewell.

Thirty seconds I did waste, though, wondering whether to go after the German next or hurry to the help of Sixpence. Then I heard six shots fired on the road below, and turned and saw the flash of two more. That decided me. I started to run down-hill, and tripped over something Anatole had dropped.

Getting up again, I groped for it, and found a big leather bandolier belt with pouches—by its weight it held two hundred cartridges, and I wondered how many more the men down-hill had between them. Hope told me I had their whole reserve of ammunition.

I picked up my own rifle that lay where I had crouched in the dark—I had actually forgotten it in the struggle—and started to run down-hill, unable to see two yards in front of me. And I was nearly brained by the backward swing of a rifle-butt that missed my nose so nearly that the skin tingled. The weight of the wind it made was like a blow.

There was no doubting the blow either, only happily it did not strike me. It was sweat that gleamed on the broad of Sixpence's naked back in front of me. It was the butt of a rifle he had seized from an enemy that went whistling in the arc of a circle through the blackness. And it was the skull of one of Anatole du Maurier's men that it landed on, with a smack that was simply sickening.

"Dat you, *Baas?*" he panted.

"Yes, Sixpence. Where are the others?"

"One, two, tree man dead—one more man head smash fall over cliff—others run away!"

"Our men, you mean?"

"No, *Baas*. Our men all right."

"Where?"

"One wid mule all the same you left him. Two more gone an' help hold mule. Mule, him afraid."

"Where are the other two?"

"Fraid like mule! Dem two hiding!"

I looked for them, while Sixpence wiped a beastly mess of brains from the rifle-butt; presently I pulled them out of the shadow there they lurked. The mule was quiet again, so I called two more of the boys and, having found that Sixpence, for all his lion's share of the battle, was unscathed and scarcely winded, started up-hill once more to hunt for Muehlendorff.

But, hunt high and low though we did, I did not find him. For one thing that robbers' lair was a big place, and in the dark there were a thousand spots where even a big man could hide. For another my men were afraid. Even Sixpence, fired with the fury of having slain assailants in the dark, was in no mood to try conclusions with a white man, and I think would have intentionally overlooked him.

We found the chains and reams though, and presently I rode down-hill on the mule with a fine disregard of anything but speed, although the bruises Anatole had given me were beginning by then to hurt.

I had a sensation of being aimed at by von Muehlendorff, and rather suspect the mule shared it, for he cantered without urging the moment he set foot on level ground.

The rest of that night's journey was and remains a nightmare. We lashed the cows to long poles that somehow or other Monty and the other two had cut in the dark; but even then they rushed about like crazy things, and a third of our loads were lost by porters who, rather naturally, jettisoned our property to save their own.

A couple of lions got wind of us and, although afraid to come in close and try conclusions, put in some lusty lung-work at medium range. Each roar was the signal for panic, and even the mules were next to unmanageable.

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We got rid of the cows at last by leaving them in a native kraal, whose sleepy owners kept us bargaining outside the gate until Monty in a great rage threatened to fire the roofs, and made a torch in proof of his determination. Then they dragged away the stake and thorn barrier and, driving our cows in, we left nine men to care for them until the remainder should be paid off and return.

Then we pressed onward through thorn-country, that made the mules' legs bleed, tore our trousers into shreds, and tortured our barelegged men.

The lions, realizing that the cows were safe from them, tagged along after us and, I suppose in a sort of spirit of revenge, scared us thoroughly whenever specially dark places gave them a chance to rush in without risk. I fired in the dark at real or imaginary yellow eyes a dozen times.

Monty fired less often, but hit nothing either. The mosquitos were a plague. We breathed them. Over and over again I brushed them from my face in handfuls, and my mule's flank to leeward of the scarcely appreciable breeze was a mess of blood.

DAWN found weary and ill-tempered boys, even the usually dauntless Sixpence, clamorous for a long halt and a sleep. Fred was inclined to back them up; he showed signs of another attack of the fever that had wrought such havoc with him on a former march. But Monty laughed all argument aside. He permitted a short halt for breakfast and to feed the mules, then spurred us on toward the Tembe River.

We could see it long before we reached it. The long line of trees on either bank made a mark along the horizon none could miss. And finding the barges proved to be an easy matter because we came on the tracks du Maurier's wagons had made when he hauled the corn bags from the river to his nest among the hills. But we were a worn-out party when we rode down a gully at last and found the barges tied nose to the bank among the reeds. Any one of them was big enough.

But we had to fight then to get the mules on board. The first one jumped in after a fifteen-minute argument with teeth and heels, only to jump out again on the far side into the river. A crocodile seized him promptly, and he disappeared screaming in a pool of blood and mud, which scarcely encouraged the others.

But what with Monty's determination and Yerkes' skill, and the brute force the rest of us exerted, we got them all in at last and lashed them so that the worst they could do was kick one another—which they did on any excuse at all, or none.

Then the worst of the journey for me began. I having served before the mast on a deep-sea-going bark, the pleasant fiction was propounded, and insisted on by all hands, that I was qualified to navigate that load down an uncharted river that was simply perfectly unknown to me.

"So all the rest of us can go to sleep and be happy!" as Fred remarked.

"Call me at Lourenço Marques in time for tea!" Yerkes grinned.

And Monty blandly bade me "up anchor and do the rest!"

There was current enough to keep us moving once we had cast off and, with the probable exception of Monty, boys and all imagined the rest of the trip would consist of a drift down-river. They were swiftly disillusioned.

"Am I skipper?" I asked.

"The captain bold!" said Monty.

"Bo's'n, pilot, engineer, admiral and commodore!" said Yerkes. "Take hold!"

"Be midshipman too!" said Fred. "Be everything! Be happy!"

So I gave Monty a long pole in the stern to steer with, put Fred on the starboard side, and Yerkes to port, each in charge of half the crew with other poles, took a long one in the bow myself for sounding purposes and to fend away from rocks and snags, and nobody got any rest whatever until we reached our destination.

We did not even stop for a meal, for we reached tide-water at the top of the ebb, and Monty agreed with me that the thing to do was to pole along down with the tide to help us. Sixpence cooked up coffee and some sort of stew down among the mules' heels, and we made the quay at Lourenço Marques at dusk.

We got into trouble then that nothing less than gold would quell, by using the Government crane to haul up our mules with. A man in a sword and wideawake hat abused us like pickpockets, we continuing nevertheless; and finally Monty solaced him with a golden English pound

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Oakes accused Cadji of backing the man into a shadow and extorting ten per cent. commission on the pound; and the high court judge grew so indignant that the rest of us almost believed the slander.

And then it was dark; and while we got the mules into a livery-stable at the back of the Braganza Arms Hotel and found quarters for our boys, Cadji gave us the slip. We could not have prevented him, of course, now that we were in a city where the law of Portugal had power behind it, but we would rather have known just where to find him later on. I was talking to Monty when the little man came up to us and interrupted.

"You will recollect, Senhor Lord Montdidier," he said in his mincing, insinuating way, "that I did not measure your claims, I did not set foot on them, I did not inspect them, I signed no papers regarding them, and that therefore thus far you have no title to them!"

"You rascal!" said Monty, smiling in a way that would not have reassured me if I had happened to be his enemy.

"Not that I will not sign, *senhor!*" said the Portuguese. "Do not forget you are dependent on me! Ten per cent! *Adios!*"

He raised his helmet with a flourish, stepped into the shadow of the great silent customs shed, and disappeared.

"What next?" said I.

"Bed!" said Monty. "We're two days ahead of the German. We'll steal a march on him again by sleeping peacefully!"

Cordova's is the hotel to go to, away up on the hill above the fever-haunted business section—that is to say, if you can afford the bill. There are real beds, real waiters, real rooms, large and airy, a real cook, and honest-to-goodness food. We rode up in 'rickishas, and were asleep before the scurrying half-bred Zulu boys had dragged and shoved us half the distance. We fell asleep between the dinner courses—snored over the after-dinner coffee—and staggered up to our rooms and sweet oblivion.

But Monty had us all awake and up an hour after dawn, although for all the good that did he might just as well have let us sleep longer. But he seemed ill-at-ease about the check and a point of ethics.

"I suppose you fellows are clear in your minds," he said, "that there's a swindle here somewhere?"

"We haven't robbed anybody yet," said Yerkes sleepily. "Are we in that line of business?"

Monty ignored the question.

"The only thing that makes me willing to sell out to anybody," he said, "is the obvious impossibility of working a mine profitably under this Government. As soon as we reached a profit-paying stage, they would tax or thieve us out of business. That German's money is good but his intention isn't—I'm as sure of that as that I sit here. He knows we're not selling anything that the Portuguese Government would give him title to. Do you get the hang of it?"

"Get the money, and let him get the hang!" said Fred. "Let's all have breakfast!"

"Wait!" said Monty. "As long as we're all clear that the German's eyes are open to what he's doing—and to what we're doing; and Cadji's eyes are open, too——"

"Let's keep that point out from under cover all the time," said Yerkes.

"Oh, cut the cackle," urged Fred. "Come to breakfast! Both sides are trying to double-cross somebody! Let's hope it isn't us! Come and eat!"

"Presently!" said Monty. "We're clear, are we, that we're willing to sell to both sides? Very well. Here's the plan of campaign. Immediately after breakfast—or as soon after that as the Standard Bank opens, we all go down together and present that check. If we get the money, well and good—we transfer it to our own account.

"Then, you, Fred, take a 'rickisha and scoot up to the British consulate. Give the consul my compliments—you'll find he's an army man and a good fellow—and ask him what he knows about local political conditions. Write down what he says if you find yourself getting bushed.

"Yerkes—you go and try to find Cadji. If you succeed, get him to introduce you to his syndicate that he says is so willing to pay us another ten thousand pounds. You handle that end of the business. Bring it as far forward as you can, and pledge our signatures."

He glanced at me. As the youngest, last joined, and least experienced member of the partnership, who could talk no Portuguese and very little Ronga, there did not seem much that I could do that morning.

"You come with me," he said. "We'll

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call on Captain Rodriguez on the Portuguese cruiser in the harbor, and find out what he knows."

SO WE breakfasted at leisure—the Portuguese are not without understanding of how to serve that meal; and I don't think one of us thought of the overland telegraph from Chai Chai that von Muehlendorff would find at his disposal the moment he should reach that place.

We were outside the bank in high spirits the moment the door opened, and inside it, feeling rather like a gang of hold-ups, before the manager himself arrived. But he came in directly afterward—an Englishman, who of course knew Monty and Oakes at once.

He was accompanied by a squat, broad-shouldered German; and it was at once obvious to every one of us that we were expected. He opened the door of a private office.

"Come in, won't you?" he invited, and we all trooped in, followed by the German and himself.

"Is that a good check?" asked Monty, sitting down.

The manager took the check and frowned.

"The account is good for that amount," he said. "Is the signature in order, Mr. Wilhelmi?"

He showed it to the German.

"Quite all right. That is the signature of Herr Heinrich von Muehlendorff, an attaché of our consulate."

Monty took back the check, endorsed it, drew a slip from the rack on the table, filled it in, and passed both to the manager.

"Credit it, then, to our partnership account," he said; and the rest of us heaved such an obvious sigh of relief that the manager smiled.

"And now a little detail!" said Wilhelmi, coughing to call attention to himself. He was a man with a heavy black mustache that hid his mouth entirely, and almost coal-black eyes that on the contrary scorned concealment. "Herr von Muehlendorff has wired just now from Chai Chai to the effect that you have with you a contract to be signed on receipt of the money. Is that so?"

Monty admitted the fact, and produced the paper.

"Will you sign it, so that the manager of this bank may witness it?"

There being no objection that we could raise, we all wrote our signatures under Monty's at the foot of the paper; the bank manager witnessed them; and Wilhelmi pocketed the deed. But he had scarcely done so—we were scarcely on our feet again—when the door burst open and in came Cadji, all spruced up in a snow-white suit—white shoes—white tie—white sun-hat—his gold watch-chain loaded down with a bunch of seals—and his smile seraphic.

"I trust I am in time!" he said, flourishing a big cigar set in a gold-mounted amber tube.

"In time for what?" demanded Herr Wilhelmi—perhaps a shade too promptly to convince.

"On my way to the court in my 'rikisha I beheld these gentlemen entering the bank. Aware of the probable nature of their business I hastened to assure them—as I now assure you, Senhor Wilhelmi—that the Government will not recognize the transaction. I speak officially!"

"Absurd!" said Wilhelmi. "The money has changed hands! The contract is signed! I have it here!" And he flourished it.

"It has no value," said Cadji.

"I shall apply to the courts this morning!" said the German.

"You will meet with refusal, *senhor!*" said Cadji, with a deep bow.

Curiously—very curiously, I thought—the German did not demand the money back.

"A German working-party is in occupation now," he announced. "The law under which the du Mauriers claimed ownership——"

"Was long ago repealed!" announced Cadji.

"Is fundamental!" said the German. "The Imperial German Government has never been asked to recognize its repeal, even if such were possible. On the contrary, the Imperial German Government did recognize the fundamental law ten years ago, when the land on which the Imperial German consulate building is erected was purchased from a Portuguese who had title to it by marrying a chief's daughter! There will be an official demand made today that this contract be stamped by the Portuguese Government and recognized!"

"The demand will be refused!" said Cadji sweetly.

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"We shouldn't have ducked that dago!" Yerkes whispered to me. "He has his points! If we had been more friendly, I'd feel less sore about taking sides with him now!"

Wilhelmi stalked out, buttoning the contract in his inside pocket.

"What does this all mean, gentlemen?" demanded the bank manager.

"I thought you fellows were supposed to know everything that's going on," said Monty. "Suppose you explain it!"

"There is nothing to explain!" interrupted Cadji. "You have heard all that there is to hear! *Senhores*—will you follow me?"

We followed the saffron Lord Chief Justice, as Fred Oakes persisted in calling him, to the outer office.

"The next thing to do," he said to Monty in a low voice, "is so to commit the Government that it simply must resist this insolent German claim. A party of my friends is ready to purchase your real rights. I am ready to certify the title to them. They are all men of influence. The money is ready. But first, *senhor*, there is a little formality—the thousand pounds commission—my ten per cent."

Monty wrote out a check and gave it to him.

"It would be gratifying," he said, "and would save trouble, were you to pay me the commission on the next transaction in advance! Another thousand pounds, senhor!"

"Nothing doing!" snapped Yerkes. "Don't you do it, Monty!"

"Oh, for a handy water-butt!" grinned Oakes.

"Thanks. We'll await developments," said Monty. "Mr. Yerkes will go with you, if you're ready, to interview your friends. He has authority to pledge our signatures!"

"Come along, Senhor Yerkes!" said Cadji, as politely as if his wedding were in the wind. "Take a seat in my 'rikisha. I will join you in a moment."

He cashed the check, and I noticed he took the money in Bank of England notes—since time immemorial the approved, and one convenient way of realizing plunder. In another minute he and Yerkes were vanishing up-street as fast as two sinewy 'rickisha boys could hurry them.

"Now!" said Monty. "Lose no time!"

"What d'you suppose is happening?" asked Fred.

"I know what's happening, but I can't prove it! Get to the consulate! Tell them nothing, but try to find out what they know!"

"Consuls are stuffy," objected Fred. "Dukes and ambassadors are gossips compared to 'em. Suppose you give me a little suspicion or two to whisper into the consul's ear—he's more likely then to unbosom himself!"

"Perhaps!" said Monty. "I do wish you'd get a move on!"

"Oh, all right!" said Fred—in rather a huff, I thought.

We parted company at the bank door, and presently Monty and I were in the stern of a small Greek sailing-boat, on our way to the flag-ship anchored in line ahead of two other, smaller cruisers. The flag-ship was a little enough tub herself and looked like a fixture, but I noticed that smoke was ascending from the third, and smallest, cruiser's one slim funnel.

We were met at the head of the companion-ladder by Captain Rodriguez himself, and if ever a man looked glad to see Monty, that was he.

"Come in!" he urged. "Come into my cabin! Who is your friend, did you say? He is in your confidence? Then come in both of you!"

He took Monty's arm, and led us aft. The whole of the rounded stern part under the old-fashioned poop-deck was his stateroom, mighty neat and comfortable, cooled by an electric fan, but far from cool enough to keep Rodriguez calm. We two sat on the red-plush-covered sofa that followed the curve of the stern, but he paced up and down, shaking his fists distractedly at intervals.

A barefooted steward brought in wine, and was sharply ordered out again. The sentry was called in, and told to keep the door closed against all comers.

"Oh, but I am glad you came, my lord!" he exclaimed. "I am glad you came! You can do nothing, but you comfort me!"

He spoke English perfectly, with that ultra-refined accent that is peculiar to educated gentlemen of southern Europe.

"How shall a man serve king and country, when his king is corrupt and his country asleep? Tell me that!"

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WHAT could one say? It would scarcely have been manners to sympathize with him on his nation's shortcomings. Monty helped himself to wine, which was perhaps the most tactful thing he could have done.

"I have no ammunition on this ship! I have no coal! Yesterday I acquired enough coal at my own expense to bunker the *Carlos* and send her on a little cruise. She returned at dawn because of leaky boilers! See her behind there—she has steam in one boiler yet. She brought me bad news. Yet, what can I do? What is such a fleet as this with which to honor my king and serve my country?"

Monty sipped the wine again.

"To your king and country, Captain Rodriguez!" he said simply.

Rodriguez stood to attention and bowed—as fine appearing a sailor-man as any one could wish to see.

"Ah, my lord, you are very kind! You can sympathize with me! You can understand me! Perhaps your heart can burn a little too on my king's account!"

He paced up and down, up and down, like a man doing sentry-go, every now and then pausing before a looking-glass to smooth his gray hair that he ruffled between his fingers the next minute.

"You have heard of the republican movement here? You have heard of it? The dogs are not content with their already too terrible corruption, but must seek to dethrone our king! They denounce the unfortunate corruption of the court—but would swallow it in worse corruption of their own!"

"I've been told," said Monty, "that the danger of a republican revolution has been lately growing less."

"True!" said Rodriguez. "True! But why? I will tell you why. Because the monarchists, poor fools, have thought a new king might suit them better. They have appealed to a foreign king—the most unrepublican monarch they could find. Listen, my lord! Listen, gentlemen!"

He came close to us and leaned forward, making a sort of trumpet of both hands as if he were bellowing through a typhoon.

"If there could be found a cause for quarrel—one simple little disagreement at this minute——"

"What then?" demanded Monty, upsetting his wine-glass.

"Then Germany would pounce on Lourenço Marques!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Monty; but I saw that he believed it.

"You seek to reassure me," said Rodriguez. "You are kind, but you are mistaken nevertheless. Yesterday I sent the *Carlos* on a cruise. This dawn she returns with word that a fleet of great cruisers lies in the offing—three great cruisers and two smaller ones that fly the German flag. And what can I do?"

I stared hard at Monty, and he looked at me. It did not take much thinking then to name the coming ground for an international dispute. The Imperial German Government, the champion of self-righteousness and clattering sabers, would back up its own subjects and the old unrighteous land-title law to the limit. But Rodriguez was too excited and overwrought to notice our mental processes.

"There is a steam-launch tied to the wharf," he said, "a fast one—oil-burning—owned by Germans—manned by Germans. You can see it through this port—look, gentlemen! They have steam up. They have had steam up for two days. Why? Is it not likely they intend to carry word to that fleet of cruisers as soon as an excuse can be arranged? And what can I do?"

"Cable Lisbon," suggested Monty.

Rodriguez laughed bitterly.

"They tell me the cable is not working! There is said to be a fracture out at sea!"

"Why not take the British consul into your confidence?"

Rodriguez bridled.

"My lord, you are no doubt not aware of it, but the British consul and I are not on speaking terms! There is a matter in dispute between us that he has not seen fit to adjust! We are to each other in position of *personae non gratissimae.* I regret the unfortunate fact, but such it is!"

"I could see the consul for you," suggested Monty.

"Ah, my lord, you are kind—you are kind—you are very kind—but—perhaps—might you not already be too late?"

Monty sprang to his feet.

"Put us ashore, old man! Your gig will take us quicker than a Greek's lugger."

"Gig! You shall have my jolly-boat and eight oars!"

He rushed to the door, threw it open,

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swore at the sentry, and shouted. A subordinate came on the run, buttoning his tunic. A whistle blew. There was shouting—a patter of bare feet—the squeak of blocks—the whine of running sheaves—and a splash.

"All ready!" announced Rodriguez. "Man-o'-war style!" he added.

"Congratulate you! Smart work, Rodriguez! Thanks!"

We were overside in a minute, I utterly content with the rhythmic thump and hum of man-o'-warsmen's oars as our sharp bow split the harbor waves. We reached the shore too soon for me, for that is the finest way in the world to travel, making steam and electricity—aye, and the clattering swagger of armed horse—mere unromantic motion by comparison. But Monty was in no mood to enjoy the means—the end was his concern—and he leaped from the boat to the wharf—and I of course after him—with scarcely a backward glance at the startled midshipman who steered us.

Nor were we alone in a hurry. I had not more than brushed the wharf dust from my knees and looked to see what Monty would do next than I caught sight of a 'rikisha propelled at frantic speed by Oakes, who had a stick in his hand with which to poke the unhappy Zulu in the shafts.

As he came 'round the corner on one wheel he got on his knees on the seat to belabor the sweating stalwart whose task was to shove behind. What with weariness, short-windedness, sweat in his eyes, the sandy track, and Fred's volcanic movements, the man in the shafts took a header and rubbed his broad, black face in the grit for a yard or two.

Then the shafts struck a stone and stopped suddenly. His upthrown feet waving frantically in the air broke Fred's parabolic flight, and a second later Fred was sitting on the Zulu's head, squeezing the sand well home. It cost five shillings and the ministrations of a druggist to subdue the Zulu's wrath.

"Hurry and tell me the news, Fred!"

We left the Zulu in the drug-store and returned to the waterside where we couldn't be overheard.

"News?" answered Fred. "There isn't any! The British consul's away—has been gone for a week, and won't be back for three weeks! The vice is sick—swears he has taken poison—'fraid for his life—don't have any faith in dago doctors—wanted to wire to Johannesburg, of all places, to get a Scotchman who amputated President Kruger's thumb or something—some sort of specialist—couldn't wire! Wire's down! Fact, for I confirmed it!"

"Isn't there a private wire from the consulate to British territory?" demanded Monty.

"Yes, but somebody has cut it! In any case, it leads along the railway just like the others, and the railway wires are cut, too!"

"Where?"

"Lord knows! Anywhere! A dozen places for all I know! Somewhere between here and Umtali—that's as near as I could get for an answer!"

A noise near the wharf made us face about and, as if our own activity had jarred into motion the too-long hidden evil influences, we saw the German steam-launch cast off and make down-harbor toward the open sea. Her crew of five men were jubilant; they blew their whistle like drunkards, and waved to some 'longshore sympathizers with as little attempts at secrecy as if they had been off on a birthday trip. They shouted, too, but I could not catch the words.

"There's just one chance!" said Monty.

"What?" demanded Fred.

"Tell us!" said I.

But at that moment Yerkes came, like Fred in a great hurry in a 'rikisha, and even more violent in his efforts to increase the speed. He managed to reach us without mishap, but was obliged to pay the Zulus double to get rid of them. Angry at the extortion, Oakes kicked one of them. That started a fight that very nearly put an end to our usefulness for the day, for two Portuguese policemen appeared and threatened us with all the rigors of their lovely law. Monty had to settle the argument with gold.

WHEN they had gone away at last Yerkes, who was bursting with information, began to splutter so that we could not understand him.

"I've got the money!" he said. "I've got the money! We owe Cadji fifteen hundred pounds, and he's clamoring for it!"

"Why fifteen hundred?" I demanded. "The terms were ten per cent."

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"I got fifteen thousand!" answered Yerkes.

There is a cheap hotel not far from the wharf, and we went to it. Monty ordered drinks for the sake of appearances, and we sat at a table in a corner, where Yerkes grew moderately calm at last.

"You know, you fellows, I'm a Yankee," he said, with a sort of triple-distilled, sub-acid glee. "That's how I found 'em out!"

"Found whom out? How? What? Where? Hurry up and tell us!"

"I thought of my rubber concession—and that's more than any of you did. Seemed to me I hadn't done much for my share in your gold claims, and I'd just as soon sell my rubber as not. I offered the lot, claims, rubber and all, for fifteen thousand and refused to sell one without the other. You ought to have seen Cadji's jaw drop! He was in a hurry, I soon spotted that. So were his friends!"

"So are we!" declared Monty. "Out with the story, man!"

"Well—no ten Portuguese in a hurry can beat one Yankee at a trade—and the more they argued the tighter I sat. So at last they yielded. And the funny part was that they had to send to Wilhelmi the German for the extra five thousand! Cadji did not tell them that I know Portuguese. They sent Cadji to fetch Wilhelmi, and while he was gone they talked straight out in front of me! What do you think of it?"

"Oh, hurry, man, hurry!" urged Monty. "Tell us what they said!"

"They're all for selling the colony out—Cadji and all of them—selling out to Germany! We sold the du Maurier so-called rights to Heine von Muehlendorff, and those are what the Germans propose to pick a quarrel over. But they were afraid the Government might yield to the Germans and give 'em whatever they demand, and that 'd spoil the excuse for the high hand.

"So the Germans have put up some Portuguese to pay us this money for the real title, and that'll give them a right to force their Government's hand and compel refusal of the German demands! D'ye see? The Germans don't want peaceful settlement, they want a fight! D'you suppose there's going to be a German revolution?"

"No," said Monty, "I don't. One won't be necessary."

He was biting his knuckles—sweeping the harbor with impatient eye—impatient, yet uncertain what to do.

"So it's German money we've got! Twenty-five thousand pounds of German gold, less ten per cent. to Cadji!"

"—— it, I know!" said Monty. "Don't rub it in! It's too late to alter it, too! We've as good as sold this part of Africa to Germany! If we offered them the money back now they wouldn't accept it. Oh, ——!"

"Just like an Englishman! Didn't I do what you asked, plus fifty per cent.?" demanded Yerkes.

"Shut up, America!" growled Oakes. "Who's treading on your corns? I'll compose a hymn about you later on!"

"The —— you will!"

"Yes," smiled Fred Oakes genially. "And sing it over your grave if you don't stop quarreling! Think, you ruffian, think!"

"There's just one chance!" said Monty.

"One's enough if it's good!" grinned Oakes.

"I'll go to the consulate. I'll buy some emetic for the vice on my way up. It's half-past eleven now—phew, but it's hot! An hour and a half from now I'll begin sending a message on the consulate instrument. I'm a poor enough signaler, but I can send faster than receive. I shall keep on sending the same message over and over until I get an answer. Look for the break, and splice it if you can—it's the one slim chance!"

"Better pay Cadji his fifteen hundred," Yerkes advised.

It was not far to the bank. We dashed in there—deposited Yerkes' check for fifteen thousand—drew out fifteen hundred cash—and made for the street again, only to see Cadji's 'rikisha coming at top speed toward us. Yerkes ran and jumped in beside Cadji before it came to a standstill.

"Tell 'em to the railway station!" he ordered, and Cadji obeyed.

"Have you my money?" I heard him ask.

"You bet I have!" said Yerkes. "And you bet you'll earn it!"

Fred and I jumped another 'rikisha, left outside a store by somebody whose boys did not care who paid them. I saw Yerkes shake a fistfull of paper money under Cadji's nose and pocket it again, and then we raced for the station helter-skelter, avoiding collisions and accidents by that most useful article we men possess—the

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skin of our teeth, and achieving speed by copious bribery. Yerkes got to the station first, for Cadji's 'rikisha boys were thoroughbreds.

Is there anything more dismal in the wide world than the pretentious terminus of a one-train, graft-ridden railway line? Anything more melancholy than the snarled official answer "No train at all today!"?

"No train?" demanded Yerkes. "Why not?"

"An accident up the line," was the answer.

"Where? Here, Cadji, you ask him."

"*Senhores*, there has been an accident. No train can run. The wire is down. No messages can come or go. Who knows anything?"

"You know that unless I get what I'm after you won't get yours!" Yerkes demanded. "You tell that station agent we three men have got to reach British territory somehow in a hurry. You use your influence if you hope to see any fifteen hundred pounds."

There was demur, deliberate delay, dispute, suspicion, and more than a little threatening on our part, but the long and the short of it was that an hour after noon we paid Cadji his fifteen hundred pounds and departed up the single track on a contractor's hand-car, with two natives to work the lever that turned the wheels.

We rode out of sight of the station and then kicked the natives off, manning the lever ourselves with energy born of excitement. But after another few miles Oakes stopped us and insisted on taking along with us a great piece of rusty sheet-iron that he fixed in our bows like a bulwark. We grumbled, and jeered at him, but it turned out to be well that he did it.

Whoever ordered that line cut out had taken small chances on its being repaired from our end. We pumped that disgusting lever until nearly half-past five before Yerkes, who was resting, spied the break in the wire a mile ahead.

"And there's a man there guarding it!" he announced. "The man hasn't seen us yet. He's one lone man with his back this way."

We had a hasty consultation and decided on the strategy. The vote stood two to one.

"Monty not being here, the ayes have it!" insisted Yerkes.

They seemed to think that my adventure in the night with Anatole du Maurier entitled me to the post of danger again; and as none of us had any sort of weapon, somebody had to do something desperate.

So I pumped the last mile single-handed, and Yerkes and Fred lay down behind the iron sheet, to make it look as if I were riding alone. The man, who turned out to be a German, saw me when I was a quarter of a mile away, and covered me with a rifle. I pretended not to see him, until I drew within shouting distance and his roared orders made further pretense impossible. Then I began to slow down, but contrived to do it very gradually. When within ten yards of him I was still doing better than walking speed, so that although he aimed now straight for my head I had good excuse for coming about abreast of him before I stopped. And even after I stopped the car rolled forward a turn or two of its own momentum.

"—— you! Vy didn't you stop ven I shout first?" he demanded.

"Who are you, anyway?" I asked him.

"Never you mind who I am! Who are you? You tell me quick!"

"I'm going with a message to meet that other car you see approaching in the distance."

He turned his head to look.

That was the end of him, of course. Fred and Yerkes tumbled out on to the track and, although he almost faced about in time, Yerkes landed with a stone behind his ear and Fred jumped on him with both feet. That left us with a rifle and fifty cartridges to the good, when we had trussed him up and laid him by a culvert where he could crawl to water when he should recover consciousness.

We knew the number of the wire we had to mend—they had all been cut clean through at one place with a hammer and chisel—so we twisted off a section of another wire to splice with; and we had not more than finished splicing when the sound of wheels coming down the line from the direction of the British border warned us that another car was really coming.

"Suppose that's not the only break?" Fred hazarded.

WE HAD no light and it was dark by that time but the oncoming party heard our voices for they began to shout.

"Only break or not, us for the trail!"

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said Yerkes, and we began to work the lever.

That could be heard, of course, for miles up-line. The oncomers stopped to listen, and then renewed their own efforts, overhauling us by dint of strength, numbers, down-grade, and probably because they had a faster car.

Presently they shouted to us again. The next thing a shot splattered and rang off our rusty old iron defense. I answered with our plundered rifle—three shots in swift succession; and whether or not I succeeded in hitting any one—the range was short but it was quite impossible to see—they stopped, and began to return up-line.

So we stopped to listen. Within five minutes we could hear the *slam-slam-slammmmm* of blows on the wire we had mended, and a moment later the unmistakable *twang* of the wire as it fell.

"Rather looks as if that was the only break," said Yerkes, "seeing they're in such an all-fired fuss to keep it broken just exactly there. I'll bet you their game is to stand by with some sort of receiving instrument and mend the break at once when they're given the word. Well—if that man Monty is as good as his word——"

"And he's better!" said Fred.

"By a long sight!" said I.

"He'll have got his message through!" said Bill Yerkes, as we pumped the infernal lever and went *ki-bum-ki-bum-ki-bumping* through the dark.

"I wonder what in the world the message is?" said Yerkes.

"Troops!" said I. "British troops down the line from Umtali!"

"Piffle!" said Oakes. "There are no troops! And what right would British troops have in Portuguese territory in any case?"

Being dog-weary of the lever, it was almost midnight before we reached Lourenço Marques—long after midnight when we had rounded up Monty at the consulate. He was smoking on the steps with the vice-consul, slapping mosquitoes and talking in low tones.

"I was poisoned," I heard as we drew nearer. "As sure as we two are sitting here, I was deliberately poisoned!"

"How about it, Monty?" Yerkes demanded. "Did you stick to it? Did you get her through?"

"Yes, I got an acknowledgment shortly after half-past five. The line seemed to be cut again directly after that, but I got the message through."

We slept that night at the consulate, expecting to be wakened at dawn by the whistles of German cruisers summoning the town to pay them homage. But it was afternoon of the next day before we saw their smoke at last; and there had been a fine little fuss in the courts meanwhile, Cadji holding forth from his bench as if no more learned and impeccable judge than he ever held the impartial scales.

The German population of the place seemed, by some uncanny process, to have been stirred to its united depths simultaneously and without advertisement. Some one had alarmed the money-changers, for their booths were closed, and Herr Heinrich von Muelendorff that noon arrived from Chai Chai, drove about town in a 'rikisha looking so important that he overflowed.

But it seemed that even the German Government observed formalities. The great, grim, frowning cruisers came to an anchor in mid-harbor, so nearly afoul of the Portuguese cruiser's chain that Rodriguez had to move.

After that there were official courtesies—calls and return calls—an admiral, all gold lace and pompousness, came ashore and visited the governor. And only after that was a representative of the German population allowed to go aboard and pay his brow-on-the-deck respects. He went in a launch with the German consul and von Muehlendorff.

All that night the cruisers lay there, dumping their garbage and offal in the harbor and fouling the view with smoke. It seemed to add to their commander's sense of his importance to make as much smoke as possible, and the fact that most of it drifted across the clean front of the governor's palace troubled him not at all. All that night they kept five search-lights moving restlessly, so that the town got no sleep. And at nine next morning the next move in the game began.

"Although—supposing that message of mine got through to the man I meant it for—I suspect they may be a wee bit late by now!" said Monty.

"Explain!" demanded Yerkes.

"You see," said Monty, "this fleet sent ashore at Mozambique for mail. I don't

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doubt for a second that the British consul there notified all our ports by wire."

"But isn't the British fleet probably at Capetown? That's how many hundred miles away?"

"No doubt that's what the German admiral is banking on," said Monty. "He has probably come from the China station in hope of catching our man with his back turned. They'd put into Durban for coal—might coal fast, you know, or they might postpone the business."

"Who should?"

"The British squadron!" said Monty.

The German admiral came ashore again, and this time he was greeted with great uproar, by no less than forty German citizens who lined the wharf to make him a petition. He took the petition grandiosely, and had himself driven to the governor's palace again. It was impossible for us to know what took place within there, but the Germans were jubilant—closed their places of business and sang songs in the hotel dining-rooms. A large section of the Portuguese semi-official politico-merchant class began to make merry with them, and that afternoon we were given to understand that an ultimatum had been handed to the governor. Unless the German demands were complied with in full by midnight, the place would be occupied at dawn next day!

"Good lord!" said I. "But doesn't that admiral know the British Government would intervene?"

"Of course," said Monty. "But he's counting on the diplomatic value of a *fait accompli*. If he has already occupied the town, it would be an act of war to try to turn him out. He won't care much if the British fleet does come—once he has done what he's here for!"

"Let's hope it comes!" said Yerkes, and we all went into the consulate and had a drink on that.

THAT night the town was in an uproar, and we went up-hill to the hotel to safeguard our belongings. We got no supper, though. The proprietor informed us that some "gentlemen" had preempted the dining-room, and it turned out that half the officers of the German fleet were being entertained by the local merchants. The songs they sang, and the jests they made were none too agreeable to British ears, even through closed doors, so we went outside on the brow of the bluff at the back of the hotel, that overlooks the harbor, and talked and smoked gloomily.

It was eleven o'clock when I saw a glare under what looked rather like a low-hung cloud not so very far out at sea. At the end of ten minutes we could count five glares—moving very fast in our direction in line ahead. At midnight the German searchlights flashed on number one of an incoming fleet, and were answered by others that out-dazzled them. A few minutes later we heard the rattle of outrunning hawsers. Then Monty led the way back to the hotel.

He brushed the hotel proprietor and half a dozen waiters aside, and threw open the double door of the dining-room. We stood behind him, wondering what next. The diners—sober and drunk—were struck silent, until suddenly one of the officers realized that one or two of us at least were English, and all unarmed.

"*Der Tag!*" he shouted, holding up his glass, drinking it empty at a gulp, and dashing it in pieces on the floor. There was an united shout in response of "*Der Tag! Der Tag!*" and then all grew still again; for it was obvious that we had not burst open the door merely to see and be seen.

"It was of '*der Tag*' that I came to speak," said Monty. "I invite you all to come outside and see what '*der Tag*' will look like when it comes!"

From the door of the dining-room to the brow of the bluff was about two hundred yards. The night air and the distance sobered some of them. Drunk and sober, they all could appreciate the wonder of the view below—two cruiser fleets at anchor in a harbor bathed in a flood of electric light.

And though some of them were very drunk indeed, all of the naval officers appreciated that the German fleet was bottled in, and could no more pass the British cruiser fleet without permission than it could fly. They were sober enough, too, to understand the bugle-calls that summoned them from the German flag-ship's deck.

We stayed on the bluff until dawn, and saw the German fleet steam out, the leading British cruisers shifting station to let them by. And when the German fleet was well

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at sea we saw another ship steam in—a collier, deep-loaded that came in and made itself fast between two British cruisers and promptly began disgorging coal on either side.

"By gad!" laughed Monty, getting up to go. "They postponed it then! My wire must have caught them with nearly empty bunkers, and they took the chance! Bluffed 'em, by gad!"

"I've always heard you Britishers couldn't play poker!" said Yerkes.

"Come along, you fellows. Let's call on the flag-ship!" said Monty. "Her skipper's a friend of mine."

Two days later, with a draft for what seemed a huge sum of money to me in Monty's inner pocket, we booked passages on the only ship available just then up-coast—a German liner called the *Bundesrath*. She was a dirty old beast, with the usual national habits, for though she only lay in the harbor a day the water about her was a stinking mess of floating grease and garbage. Growing greatly daring in the light of recent happenings the Portuguese authorities complained, and a huge tub full of awfulness was stood amidships, in readiness to be dumped at sea.

The whistles roared farewell to the port—the Germans are great on whistles—and the hawser started clanking home when we espied Heinrich von Muehlendorff in a small boat alongside. He was looking up and waving to attract somebody's attention.

"Cajole him, Monty!" Fred whispered gleefully; and he and Yerkes made in a hurry for the lower deck.

"Here's wishing you a pleasant law-suit for your money, Herr von Muehlendorff!" said Monty

I saw him look up—saw his expression change to one of loathing—and then raced after the other two. From below I could hear Monty again clearly.

"Oh, by the way Herr von Muehlendorff, it was we who sent the message that brought the British squadron!"

"I suspected it, you swindling swine!"

"One!" said Oakes.

"Two!" said Yerkes.

"Three!" said I. "And he's just underneath!"

And we hove the undigested evil from the galley of the *Bundesrath* politely, perfectly, and timely on to Heine in his boat below. The anchor was up by that time, and the *Bundesrath* gaining way. The last I saw of him Heine was removing garbage from his mouth and eyes and ears.

An hour later yet, in our chairs in the after smoking-room, we made a new agreement—oral as always as to intimate details—simple as law would let it be as far as writing went. Yerkes wrote it out, and we signed it, Monty signing last.

"I'm going on with you," said Yerkes, "and I'm glad. I never met three fellows I liked better. I like you, Monty, and agree to what's written there. I agree to what we've said besides. But there's one point I'd like to be wiser on."

"Out with it, America!" roared Oakes. "I'll bet it's about votes for men!"

"Right!" announced Yerkes. "What the —— did you mean, Monty, back there in the Libomba Hills by calling for our vote when you intended all along to take your own line?"

Monty smiled, and leaned back luxuriously, like a handsome, sleek black cat, I thought, that views a bird.

"You suspect that's un-American?"

"Oh, well," said Yerkes, "perhaps not that. The States are a big place. They contain a lot of different sorts of people."

"Who would you call your greatest American?" asked Monty softly.

"Lincoln!" said Yerkes at once.

"I'm inclined to agree with you," said Monty. "I've made quite a study of Lincoln. I've a library of books about him—one of the best in the world, I'm told. Shall we agree that while I'm leader I'm to keep within bounds in future that Lincoln wouldn't have objected to?"

"No one could find any fault if you'd stick to that," said Yerkes.

"Then we'll agree on that," said Monty.

"Fine!" said Yerkes.

"Remarkable man, was President Lincoln," said Monty, and Yerkes agreed.

"D'you remember that occasion when he sat with his cabinet all day and made no headway with them. At last he called for a vote and found they all disagreed with him. Remember what he said? 'The vote stands, seven noes, one aye. The ayes have it!' Then he walked out, you remember. If he had stayed in there and argued, I wouldn't had admired him half as much. Would you?"

"No!" said Yerkes. "They're on me! I admit it! Steward!"

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WHEN THE SUN WENT DOWN

BY HARRY MOORE

MONCUR savagely drove his paddle into the seething, swirling current of the Rapid River and rounded the bend. He beached his canoe, plumped down on a fallen tree and a curse passed his lips.

The sun was two hours from setting. Two hours!

In two hours he would go back. Back to the shack where he and George Featherstone had spent ten long, long months. Back to the shack, one hundred miles from civilization, where he and his partner had quarreled over some trifling difference of opinion in the habits of the carcajou. Back to the shack from which he had ordered Featherstone to remove his effects and which, in two hours, would be silent to the voice of the trapper heading out on the long, long trail.

The sun was two hours from setting.

Moncur poked his pipe between his set teeth and gazed at the sun. He wasn't a religious man, neither was he an infidel. A strange admonition haunted him—

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath!"

Bah! Moncur kicked his toe into the sand and got up. But . . . His black eyes narrowed to mere slits and he stared ahead. He could never forgive himself if anything should happen to Featherstone on the way out. A sensitive man, quick to quarrel, Moncur was also quick to forget—which is true forgiveness.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath!"

One quarrel in ten months! And how silly it all was! Moncur crammed his pipe full of tobacco and his eyes sought an opening in the trees down-stream. His fingers fumbled for a match, got it, and he leaned over to strike the match on his heel. But his hand hung motionless. Down the river . . . .

Down the river attempting to cross the mouth of the narrows Featherstone . . . .

Moncur dropped his pipe. His eyes dilated. His jaws locked. He realized instantly that Featherstone would not go out until he packed the furs he had left in the cache across the river two days before. And to reach those furs without the canoe, Fatherstone had taken the only means left —a forty-foot log that had been carried by the eddy into quiet waters in front of the shack.

But in such treacherous waters—to pass the mouth of the narrows . . . Featherstone surely must have known that what he was trying to do was impossible. It was suicide—it was . . . .

Moncur held his breath for an instant. And then—then with a cry on his lips he sprang into his canoe.

Featherstone had reached the middle of the current. He stroked left-handed. Inch by inch he won over the awful power that had never been overcome. Inch by inch. Log and man hung motionless. And the narrows tumbled and foamed menacingly.

The log swung slowly. Featherstone turned his face up-stream. And what an expression of desperation was written there!

"Hold! Hold!"

Bent double, Moncur exerted every ounce of his strength to reach his companion. Their hands touched.

The log shot sidewise like a ship that had been hit broadside, hurtling Moncur and his canoe into the still waters and—safety. The log dipped once, twice, popped out of sight and when it came into view again, Featherstone was nowhere to be seen.

Moncur staggered up the steep bank below the narrows and placed the limp body of his partner on the ground. He tore Featherstone's shirt open and put an ear to his breast. Then Jack Moncur slowly got to his feet and whisked off his dripping hat.

And the sun went down!

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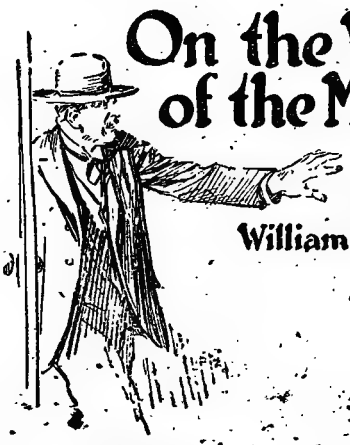
On the Wings of the Morning

by

William M. McCoy



IN TAWNY ranks the mountains stood guard about the valley, lifting spare shoulders and rock-helmeted heads majestically into the infinite blue of the California sky. To the west the calm profile of the Sleeping Giant counseled a sublime peace, while the lesser guardsmen in the ranks of the range concurred in somnolent majesty. Under their spell, ancient live-oaks spread their giant branches protectingly over the floor of the valley and whispered to the breeze of days so long past that only the mountains and themselves remembered, but beneath those branches there was no peace.

Something sinister, like a long arm from another world, had reached into the valley, and a hand we could not see had strangled peace, and was already at the throat of justice. Outside the tiny Casitas court-room men stood in little groups, smoking silently, their eyes asking questions their lips could not formulate. Women talked guardedly, anxious eyes upon their men. In the shade of the oaks to one side, greasers from all over the Topa Topa country squatted, waiting.

Inside the packed court-room a man was on trial for murder. That was ugly enough, but that was not what made the stuffy air of the little room so hard to breathe; that was not what had brought a strange, wondering sternness into the eyes of men, and anxiety into the eyes of their women.

Murder is sordid, trying a man for his life an ugly task, but these were stern realities; something we could see, understand, reason out. But day after day we crowded into that court-room and watched, while something we could neither understand nor see, drew a net of the fine lines of agony over a man's face, snuffed the light from his glance, drove his eyes into deep, dark-rimmed sockets, and sucked the glow of life from his skin. And that man was not the murderer; he was the judge.

Old Ed Baxter was justice of the peace. We called him "Judge," and in the valley he was judge of about everything. So honest that his word was proverbial, men took all sorts of disputes to him for settlement. But instead of going into court regularly, with lawyers and papers and things, folks had fallen into the habit of dropping around to see Judge Ed, pulling up chairs beside his on the gallery in front of his office, and then each telling him their side of the dispute.

Maybe old-Ed didn't know much law, but he would listen, smoking musingly all the while, and more than likely he would spin a yarn or two after the others had finished. Then, when he had them thinking of something beside the trouble between them, he would tell them what looked right to him, and folks had found that what looked right to Ed generally was right.

He had been in the valley so long that even the other old-timers had forgotten when he came. He had married Jane Pritchard there, reared his two children there, and was known to be well-off in a modest way.

Young Ed, his son, was the valley's prize

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product. His mother had been a school-teacher before her marriage, and had ambitions for her children. When young Ed went away to college some folks talked pretty loud, braying about foolish frills and the ruination of book-learning.

But a few years later, when old chaps with spectacles and whiskers, and long strings of letters trailing along after their names, began hanging medals on Ed, and making speeches when they handed him degrees he had won, this sort of yowling died down *muy pronto*, and the first thing we knew we were bragging about our Ed.

He was expecting to be appointed principal of the high school at the county-seat now, and his mother had proudly shown the postmaster's wife the letter from the president of the university where Ed graduated, telling Ed that as soon as he had had a bit of seasoning and aging, they wanted him in the university faculty.

Kate Baxter, old Ed's daughter, was just home from college, and Kate was as pretty a girl as you would see in a day's ride. She had won a teacher's certificate, too, but Kate wasn't going to teach. Instead she was to become mistress of all the rolling leagues of the Circle Six ranch, for she was engaged to marry Dick Briscoe, Captain Briscoe's only son, and as fine a chap as ever branded a calf.

We all knew this. We couldn't think of anything that old Ed had to worry about. It looked to us as if the sunset grade was going to be mighty easy for him, and that made it just that much harder to understand what was happening to him now. He was somewhere around sixty years old, but before the trial he had looked fifteen years younger, and was springy and vigorous. Before the hearing was over he looked eighty years old, and seemed doddering.

He had never had any use for the murderer. It was past belief that his duties in the case should so affect him, for he did not even have to pass sentence. This was just the preliminary hearing, provided by the California law, under which a man charged with murder is first taken before a justice of the peace.

The justice hears the evidence against the accused, and if he deems it sufficient, holds the man for trial in the superior court, which is always located in the county-seat. But if the justice feels that the man has been falsely accused, he frees him. He can not send a man to the gallows, but he can set him free.

When we drove to town for the hearing the first day, we knew the evidence to be so clear and conclusive that we thought the whole thing would be over in half an hour. It was just a sort of legal nuisance, for a greaser had killed one of the Aliso Rancho's old riders, and there was only one answer.

Manuel Ruiz shot "Sickles" Crim, not in reason-consuming anger, but deliberately, premeditatedly, and for money. Locoed by his hatred for the Aliso crew, and what he believed a sure tip, he had bet wildly on a horse-race we had arranged, staking even his prized possession, the Red Bull saloon.

The crew of us got up the race, but the old colonel owned the Aliso, and there simply wasn't a limit when it came to backing our horse, Topa Topa Boy, with old Sickles up. This must have worried Ruiz, for just to make sure he did not lose, he hid in the brush on a hill overlooking the field in which the race was run, with his rifle ready.

The crews of the Flying H and Circle Six had backed our horse, of course, and the greaser's chance came when some of the buckaroos in the field began whooping and shooting into the air, for with the race nearly over, Topa Topa Boy looked a sure winner. In the noise and excitement we did not hear the report of the rifle on the hill.

But one man not only heard it but also saw the greaser aim and fire—and that man was the parson. He had tried to persuade us not to run the race, but like a lot of other folks who thought they must not be seen at a horse-race, the parson just couldn't stay away, and before the horses started he had found a secluded reserved seat on the brushy hill.

The parson and the saloon-keeper certainly had not planned to watch the race together. Casitas was a little one-parson, one-saloon mountain town, and the two had locked horns, and were pawing the dirt and throwing up a big dust, each trying to drive the other off the range.

When the parson saw Ruiz directly below him he had thought it a little strange; but when the saloon-keeper suddenly raised a rifle, and fired, the parson saw through his little plan, leaped down on top of Ruiz, wrenched the rifle from him, and before the surprized greaser could collect his wits, he was a prisoner.

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The murderer's bullet went through Sickles, and on into the Boy's lungs, but old Sickles and that grand black stallion beat death to the wire, hanging on to life until they won. Most of the money the greasers around the valley earned had gone over the Red Bull's bar, and their wives and children had gone hungry.

But when Topa Topa Boy shoved that game nose of his under the wire the Red Bull had died, for the old colonel won it. Folks sort of missed the Red Bull for a while, but pretty soon the greasers were getting used to eating three times a day, and the ranchmen stopped being surprized when their teams got back from town on time.

WHEN we reached Casitas that first day, rigs were coming in from all sides, and skinners and riders from a dozen ranches lounged in the shade, while the greasers squatted in groups a little farther away. Outside the court-room folks passed the time o' day, and talked as usual, but the moment they went inside something made them wonderingly quiet.

A lawyer from the city was there to defend Ruiz, but that didn't bother us at first. We wanted the greaser to have a fair trial, but when this lawyer got started we began to think the world was turning backward or something.

He was fat and paunchy, with a pale face that was flabby everywhere except around his mouth. He wore the biggest pair of spectacles we ever saw, and they were a queer sort of light amber color. His hair was gray and curly, and he wore it kind of bushy all over, without any part, and so long it hung over the tops of his glasses. In his black clothes he was kind of oily and sleek, and he could be more insolent while he was smirking and using polite words than any rough-talking man we ever saw.

The parson testified, telling his story in about two minutes, and then that lawyer began cross-examining him—and he cross-examined all day. He asked how the parson knew Ruiz was shooting at Sickles; how he came to know it was Ruiz who actually shot Sickles; wanted to know if the shot had not accidentally been fired while the two were struggling for possession of the rifle, and had accidentally killed.

Then he switched around and asked the parson if he and Ruiz had not been bitter enemies for a long time; if it were not true that he had tried to prevent the race; and began hinting that the parson had taken the gun from Ruiz and fired the shot himself.

That lawyer kept right on, while the cold sweat chilled us outside, and we nearly caught fire and burned up inside. The parson was the judge's next-door neighbor and close friend. We could hardly believe the trial was real. The young deputy district attorney who was prosecuting Ruiz, objected, pounded the desk, took what he called "exceptions"—but Judge Baxter seemed paralyzed.

When court adjourned for the day it looked as if the parson were on trial for murder, instead of Manuel Ruiz. While the lawyer was talking we were plain blind with fury, but after he was through a little of the mad got out of our eyes, and we looked at the judge, and stared in awed wonder. He had aged ten years since morning. Scarcely speaking to any one, he went home, his head bowed.

That evening we found out a little about this city lawyer. Folks said his name was Jenkins, and that Ruiz' friends had hired him. He was what they call a criminal lawyer, and he was a smart one, for during the next two days he just naturally stood the Topa Topa country on its head. A man would swear to tell the truth, and then tell it, and when time for cross-examination came, the first question that lawyer asked went about this way:

"Ah, yes, yes," he would say, looking at you all the time with eyes that never seemed to blink behind those big spectacles. "Where did you say you were in jail last?"

The deputy district attorney would object, and you didn't have to answer, of course, but the trouble was that maybe some of us had been in jail at one time or another. While we all but choked, that sidewinder of a Jenkins would grin like a snake, and say:

"Never mind, never mind, I really did not wish to embarrass the witness. But what line of work have you followed since your release?"

And we were old Ed's friends. We couldn't make it out, something had simply locoed our world. Maybe you know how we felt, but we had passed our word to Sheriff Joe Walters that we would make no trouble during the trial. But if the Recording Angel is on the square, he chalked up

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at least some of the things we said and thought against that lawyer's record.

Each day showed Judge Baxter more feeble, his face more deeply lined, his eyes more sunken and lifeless, his skin fading to a pasty, wet-ashes color. The defense offered no testimony at all, and the end of the hearing came at last. In his argument that shifty lawyer accused the parson by innuendo as plainly as if he had used honest words, and during it all Ruiz sat up pompously, grinning brazenly.

The deputy district attorney talked a while, and then the judge mumbled that the evidence was so involved that he would have to take the case under advisement, and remanded Ruiz to the custody of the sheriff until his decision was made.

Too astonished and stupefied by conflicting emotions to think coherently, we trooped outside. Folks stood in wondering groups, or milled around aimlessly, while the sheriff and his deputies started for the county-seat with Ruiz, to put him in the county jail until the judge filed his order in the case.

Kate Baxter came to the door of the court-room. She looked as sick as we felt, but we thought too much of her to stare at her, or to try to talk to her just then. She went inside, and after a little came out with her father leaning on her as if he couldn't walk alone.

All sorts of men started forward to give old Judge Ed a hand, but someway we couldn't take the second step. Old Ed didn't seem to see any of us, and he looked ready to collapse. Kate led him home, trying to hold her head and shoulders straight in spite of the weight of the stricken man doddering beside her.

When the judge had disappeared, folks began to look at us. Sickles had been an Aliso rider, and they were wondering what the Aliso crew was going to do. We knew what they were thinking, but we were so muddled we didn't know the answer. We had sort of bunched, and moved off a little way, when "Bad Andy," foreman of the Circle Six, came over with some of his boys and joined us. A minute later "Slim Steve," foreman of the Flying H, and half a dozen of his crew came jingling up, and slid out of their saddles.

"How 'bout it, Jim?" Bad Andy asked our foreman.

"Say when we can meet you boys," drawled Slim Steve.

Old Jim was rubbing his chin, his sombrero in one hand. Other folks had stopped talking, and were trying to hear.

"If the law misses the greaser that killed Sickles," Jim said, and paused a moment, "we'll get him ourselves, o' course. Somehow the law 'pears to be mired down right now, but I'd powerful well like to see it pull out and take care of this lizard regular."

"You're sightin' straight, Jim," agreed Slim Steve. "If the law don't corral him, well, you know where the Flying H is!"

"You shore roped the right idee," agreed Bad Andy. "Give the law a chance, but make —— sure that the coyote of a greaser hangs!"

STEVE and his boys swung into their saddles and loped away. Bad Andy and his riders stayed with us, for it was a long ride to the Circle Six, and we had asked them to stop at the Aliso for supper. When Steve rode away folks began crowding up, for the three old foremen had talked mighty low, and none but their crews had heard, and mountain folks are just as curious as other folks.

Everybody seemed to want to talk to us, asking all sorts of foolish questions, and making just as foolish excuses for mixing in. Mrs. Waldron, the postmaster's wife, bustled up to Jim, making quite a fuss of bringing him a letter for the old colonel which had come after we stopped for the mail at noon. Then she asked in a whisper that carried ten rods if he thought Judge Baxter had been bribed, and if he thought there might be a lynching.

We drove home through purple shadows, while in the red glory of the afterglow the mountains seemed transfigured into thrones of the Almighty. But we looked without seeing. Our minds were butting against a wall, vainly seeking a door.

What unseen power was crushing the life out of Judge Baxter? How could he even consider freeing the man who had murdered old Sickles? But always before we could formulate an idea or an answer, another mysterious question would explode in our minds, and we were not skilled in solving mysteries.

We ate supper automatically, and in silence. When we started to scrape back our chairs we all stopped as if at some signal,

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for we heard the rhythmic tattoo of the hoofs of a furiously ridden horse, and we sat still to listen. Straight on through the darkness to the cook-house it came.

Jim hurried to the door and opened it, almost colliding with Kate Baxter. She came in, breathless, her clothes disheveled and hair loosened by wild riding, her eyes glowing dully, as if reflecting torture fires burning within her soul, and her breathing sounded like it hurt.

While our jaws sagged and we sat, hypnotized by something we could not understand, big old Jim slipped a long arm around her, and started to help her to a chair. She looked quickly up at him, then turned to us, refusing to move to the chair, but holding tight to Jim with one hand, while she pressed the other to her breast.

"Father—has—set—Ruiz—free!"

The words sort of rasped. Kate caught her breath between each one. Our minds too stunned for thought, we sat, gaping.

"He signed the order an hour ago," she went on, struggling to speak the words plainly, "and then—then tried to kill himself!"

As we scrambled to our feet chairs tipped over, banging loudly in the otherwise silent room, and we looked from Kate to each other, our minds groping dizzily. Jim tried again to make Kate sit down, but she wouldn't, and faced us with a strange, unreadable look in her eyes.

"Your paw ain't been well," Andy tried to help her out. "It 'peared to me he was seein' ghosts, but it don't make no difference what he's done, Kate, we know he was tryin' to do right. Tell us what's been killin' him."

"They found out—they threatened——"

"No!" exploded Jim. "Not—not——"

"Who told 'em?" demanded Andy, his face going black and his eyes flaring, while to us the world seemed one cyclone of unanswerable questions.

"That lawyer found out. He was in league with demons," she said in a parched whisper, forcing each word past her lips with a visible effort. "He had us in his power. He even forced father to submit to all the humiliation and disgrace of the last three days. I knew something was killing father. It nearly killed me, too, but I did not know what it was. Mother told me all about it, tonight, for the first time."

Jim gently forced her into the chair, and then he seemed to remember we were there.

"The boys don't know, Kate," he said, "but they are in this now, and they've a right to know. It's safe with them, and I'll——"

"Thirty-nine years ago," she interrupted as if reciting something she dreaded, yet had to say, "when father was just twenty-two, he took some money!"

"You too sick to talk, Missy Katie. You dlink this, him stlong coffee. Him flix you up. Talk mo' betta then."

It was Duck Sing, our Chink cook. The old heathen was bending over Kate, his yellow face all funny wrinkles, while he held a tray with a cup and saucer on it. Kate looked at him a moment, then tried to drink the coffee, but she seemed unable to swallow.

"FATHER was reckless and a little wild, like so many boys are," she began again, speaking more evenly, a strange new note in her voice, "but he had a fair position as a bookkeeper and collector. One Saturday evening he collected one hundred and twenty dollars from one of his firm's customers in a neighboring town, and did not get back until too late to turn it in. This had happened before, and father thought nothing of it, but before he got home with the money he met some friends who were—were—celebrating. They persuaded him to join them without waiting to go home.

"Later they met others whom father says he never could remember, and when he roused the next evening from the effects of his—his spree, all his money was gone! His own, and the one hundred and twenty dollars belonging to his employers! He knew he could not raise that much money—that his shortage would be discovered the next morning.

"He was panic-stricken, and foolishly ran away. Too late he realized that he should have gone at once to his firm, confessed, and attempted to make arrangements for paying the money back. He was soon caught, of course. Because he had tried to escape he was easily convicted of embezzlement, and given a heavy sentence—ten years.

"Father had served seven bitter years, when a man by the name of Norman Quizell, who had just been sent to prison, was assigned to work beside him. This man Quizell had the ability to lead men, and he

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persuaded father and some others to join in a plot to escape. In a few months their chance came, and their plan proved successful.

"But officers were close on their trail, of course. The night after their escape, father and Norman Quizell were stealing a ride on a freight-trian, when it was wrecked. They escaped with minor injuries, but a tramp was killed, and terribly mutilated. Under Quizell's directions, father put his prison shoes, with his prison number in them, on the feet of the dead tramp.

"The man was mutilated past recognition, and when the body wearing the shoes of the escaped convict was found, father was reported as dead, and the officers stopped looking for him. Then he came West.

"Since then he has really been what they call a fugitive from justice, and always he has been haunted by the fear that he would be discovered. But he paid the money back, anonymously, of course, and thought that honorable living would erase the stain, and here in the West, thirty years ago, they let a man be honest, and asked no questions. A man was just what he was. A real crook would have changed his name, but father was not a crook and kept his own.

"Father rode the range with Jim and Andy when they were scarcely more than boys, and they knew his story. When the old colonel decided to put father in charge of his business in town so many years ago, father told him the truth. The colonel gave him the position just the same. When father asked mother to marry him, he told her. She knew he was a good man, and believed the past was dead and atoned for.

"Four people here in the mountains knew, you see, but none of them have ever breathed a word about it. But when that lawyer came up here the day before the trial, he came to see father, and he had a record of the whole thing, and father identified beyond any question or escape."

"How'd he find out?" demanded Andy again.

"This lawyer had employed detectives to look up every one who had any connection with the case," Kate went on. "According to him, this man, Norman Quizell, with whom father escaped, had kept track of the others, and finally had sold to one of these private detective agencies a record of the whole thing, telling where the men were then.

"He treated father shamelessly. Hooted at his pleadings that he had lived honorably for thirty-two years. Scoffed when father begged for mother, for Edward, and for me. Scorned father's claim that he had repaid the money, and had been honest, and said that father was a crook, an escaped convict, that he had the proof and would use it unless father did just as he was ordered.

"He boasted that all he had to do was to notify the authorities back East, and that they would have father arrested, would take him back to prison, and father knew this was true. Then he taunted father, asking what chance Edward would have of securing his high-school appointment, of ever getting a professorship, if it became known that his father was a convict. And he, oh, he——"

"So that was what was killin' old Ed!" interrupted Tom. "That's how the fat snake made him let Ruiz off!"

"Yes, but clearing Ruiz was only part of his plan," Kate hurried on. "He was hired by the brewer and the distillers who sold goods to the Red Bull. They cared nothing for Ruiz, it was the Red Bull license they wanted to save. The parson and the church people had been trying to force the saloon out, you know, and then, when the old colonel won it, he closed it instantly.

"This lawyer, Jenkins, was to clear Ruiz in such a way as to discredit and even throw suspicion on the parson; to make it appear that Ruiz and his friends were really the law-abiding citizens of Casitas; that they had been persecuted by the church people, and that the parson had even resorted to murder to throw suspicion on them, and drive them out.

"They knew Ruiz could never live here again, of course, but when they had accomplished what I have told you, they expected to be able to get a new license for one of their own men, and to open a new saloon in Casitas, for the Red Bull had always made money for them."

"—— an' Bee-ell-zee-bub!" Larry cursed under his breath. "Did them coyotes figger to save a murderer's mangy neck, an' do all the rest o' that, jest to make money?"

"They did, Larry," Kate said, a sob in her voice. "Father wanted to resign, he tried to do everything, but that lawyer had him. Father and mother talked it over. She told me they agreed they could have faced the disgrace themselves—but that

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when they thought of Edward and me, they did not know what to do. After the trial closed this evening, that lawyer came to father, and demanded a decision freeing Ruiz. He had it all written out. Father signed it. Then, when the lawyer had gone, father tried to kill himself."

"He didn't shoot—didn't—" stammered Tom.

"No," she said more calmly. "Mother had been so worried about him that she was watching. Last night she found he had some deadly mercury tablets, and she substituted harmless ones for them. You must not judge father harshly." She was sobbing now. "He knew he could never face his old friends as long as that decision stood. But he thought the exposure the lawyer threatened would ruin Edward's career. He even thought Dick would—would——"

"Don't you worry about Dick," urged Tom.

"I'm not worrying—not—not that way," Kate declared, trying to speak coherently. "His stepmother has opposed our marriage. Since she moved into their big home in the city, and has been so much in society, she has grown pretty high and mighty. She would make all the trouble she could, I know, but Dick—if——"

"My money's on Dick," interrupted Pete. "When he finds out 'bout this he'll jes' natchally burn the wind till he corrals and kills that —— sidewinder!"

"I'm afraid he will!" Kate was sobbing again, "and oh! He must not! He must not! It can't be made right that way. Promise me, Andy, that you won't let him!"

BAD ANDY'S face was working queerly. Dick had more than a first mortgage on his heart. Andy had taught him to ride, to rope, to shoot. When Dick's mother died he was but a lad, and the captain and Andy had been both father and mother to the boy. The captain lived in the city most of the time now, and Andy ran the Circle Six as if it were his own. But Dick was through college and a man now, and he was making the captain's and Andy's hearts glad by taking up his life's work on the ranch where he belonged.

"I'll promise," Andy said, his words dry and hard. "Dick's a man, an' I can't keep him from lookin' up this snake, but I'll stay with him. I taught Dick to shoot, an' he's a hand with a gun, but mebbe I've had more experience, an' I figger to finish this killin' afore Dick can draw!"

"But you must not!" Kate pleaded. "Don't you see it would do no good? If this man is killed, those who hired him will carry out their threats anyway. He bragged of that to father. That is not the way. Mother sent you a message. She knew how you would feel. She wants your promise that you will neither let Dick kill this man, nor kill him yourself. She says it can not be made right that way."

A queer change came over Andy. While we looked he seemed to get limp, and sort of stagger. Then he straightened up.

"Your maw decided between Ed an' me twenty-six year ago, Kate," he said reverently. "She picked the best man. I don't know how to play her game, but you can tell her I'll try!"

"But what do you want us to do?" Jim asked, rubbing his chin, as puzzled as the rest of us.

"That lawyer is driving to the county-seat with an order for the release of Ruiz. Mother and I want you to stop him, and take the papers away from him. If he gets to the sheriff first it will be too late!"

"But then he'll—he'll—" stammered Jim, more puzzled than ever.

"He will carry out his threat," she said defiantly. "We can't reach Edward, but mother and I know he would want us to do just what we are doing. Father will make a new order tomorrow holding Ruiz for trial for murder. Father will have to go to jail, but he will have lived up to his oath—he will have been honest to the end. We are all determined. We can face the exposure, the disgrace, if you want to call it that, but it will not be dishonor," she ended, her head high and proud.

"Not while I can swing a whip!" exploded Tom. "The snake that killed old Sickles is goin' to die, but you folks ain't goin' to be made to suffer for it!"

Kate maintained her proud stand, and tried to speak, but her words were drowned in thundering profanity that rocked the cook-house.

"Have you told any one else?" Jim asked, when he could be heard.

"Only Mrs. Byrd."

"What did the parson's wife say?" Jim urged.

"She wouldn't let me finish. When I said

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I was coming here, she said you and the colonel would know what to do, then she hurried to mother. But mother and I——"

Her voice was drowned in an unceremonious scramble. When Jerry came back from the ranch-house with the old colonel, the riders had already brought guns from their bunks, and were swinging the holsters on the outside. We skinners had slipped our old forty-fives inside the front of our pants, hooking the hammer over the top hem, and were looking for vests to cover the protruding butts.

Before we were ready the old colonel had the gist of Kate's story, and his fine old face was sad, but mighty stern. He didn't talk fast, and he didn't seem to hurry, but before she had finished telling him all that had happened, Pete was burning the miles between the Aliso and the Flying H.

And he was up on Purgatory, a mare that had never in her life been allowed to run as far or as fast as she wanted to—but Pete had orders to give her her chance, get Steve and his boys and send them to capture the lawyer, and then to find old "Bud" Lacy, and have him round up some of his old gun-fighting deputies and capture the county jail.

Purgatory's staccato hoof-beats had scarcely died out before Bad Andy was riding for the Circle Six and the rest of his crew, Dave was swinging away over the rolling hills toward the Santa Ana, and Larry was galloping for the county-seat, to find old Judge Blackstock and Jefferson Brock, to tell them how the law had failed, and that Ruiz would be given another trial that night.

"But—but—what are you going to do?" stammered Kate.

"You must leave this to us, my child," the old colonel said soothingly. "One man has been murdered. We will not stand idle while another's honor is dragged in the dust. This is now entirely out of your father's hands. They can not take revenge on him for what he can not prevent. They forced him—tortured him into submission—but Manuel Ruiz will answer tonight to the law of the men of the mountains!"

Kate seemed trying to say something, but the words would not come. She knew every man the old colonel had summoned, and knew why. Bud Lacy had been sheriff for twenty-eight years, years when there had been violence in plenty, and he and his old-time deputies had ruled by their ability to draw and shoot, and by a courage that was absolute. Judge Blackstock had been judge of our county superior court for thirty years, and Jefferson Brock prosecuting attorney for nearly that long.

But none were now in office. Things moved faster now. The towns were full of brisk newcomers who did not know these, or appreciate their worth, and all of them, with their old-fasioned ways, had been brushed aside by a hurrying world—but folks in the mountains have long memories. The colonel turned from Kate, and called Jerry.

"Do you remember my friend, Mr. Franklin Sinclair, who visited me for a few days last year?" he asked.

"You mean the big gray man, gray clothes, gray eyes, gray hair?" Jerry wondered.

"That is the gentleman," confirmed the colonel. "The letter you brought me tonight was from him. I have been expecting a return of his visit, and he writes me that he will stop over in the county-seat tonight, and come up here in the morning. The northbound express stops at the county-seat at midnight. You meet the train. He will remember you, for he never forgets a face. Tell him I want him to accompany you to the court-house, and wait for me there. He is a great lawyer, and we may need him tonight."

By the time the old colonel was ready we had three two-seated buckboards ready, with four real horses hitched to each one, and we drove down the valley, a wee new moon silvering the sycamores and making the shadows under the oaks darker. The colonel and Kate were in the back seat of my buckboard, and all the way down I could hear the old thoroughbred trying to comfort her, and could hear her breath come chokingly. When we drove into Casitas we knew that, by then, over mountain and mesa men were riding hard, and that down other cañon roads men were driving, just as we were.

THE other two rigs hurried on. I stopped in front of Judge Baxter's house, of course. The old colonel went in with Kate. After a bit I saw him come out of the house, and go next door to the parsonage. In a few minutes he came down the walk with the parson, and the

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parson had his hat and overcoat on. They got into the buckboard, and I started.

Not one rig or one horseman did we pass on the road. I drove hard every mile of the way, but it was after midnight when we rattled into the county-seat. The town wasn't asleep. It was too quiet for that. I drove through a stretch of road so overshadowed by overhanging trees that the darkness was absolute.

When my team emerged on the other side a horseman was riding at the wheel. He must have recognized the team, for he wheeled and rode back before I could make out who it was, and no word was spoken.

A block farther along two riders sat their horses so quietly that they were silhouetted against the sky like statues. Neither spoke as I drove between them. One was "Snakes" McTavish, the other "Baldy" Sims. They had recognized the team, of course, and simply nodded as we drove on. Except for the few street-lights, we did not see a light until the jail and court-house came into sight.

The court-house was partly lighted. Four skinners lounged on the steps. The square was full of horses and rigs. When the colonel and the parson had gone inside I hunted for a place to tie my team. At every street-corner silent riders sat their horses. Hitching my team, I started for the court-room, for the colonel had told me to come. At every angle of the building a skinner lounged. On the steps I met "Freckles" Holt, boss skinner of the Circle Six.

"Did the boys get that lawyer in time?" I asked.

"That coyote's too slick to live," he answered, his voice low. "He was expectin' trouble, an' pretty nigh killed his team tryin' to git here, but Steve an' his crew overhauled him."

"How about Ruiz?" I asked. "Did old Bud get him?"

"You know it, 'Two Pair,' " he grinned. "Ole Bud jest walked into that jail with two of his ole gun-fightin' depooties, an' allowed he would act as sheriff fer a while. Didn't pull a gun, or make any fuss a-tall. Pete says Joe Walters shrunk a foot in two blinks, an' Joe ain't no coward, neither. Now him an' his depooties is locked in their own jail."

"What about the town folks? Has there been any trouble?"

"I ain't seen no town critters," Freckles grinned again. "We're lookin' fer trouble, but it 'pears to be hard to find. The skinners is guardin' the cote-house an' jail; an' the riders is holdin' the town quiet.

"Dick's boss o' the riders tonight. He come in with us, o' course, an' Andy run things at fust, naturally, but he wanted to give pussenel 'tention to that curly-headed horned toad of a lawyer, an' he an' Jim an' Steve figgered a leetle, an' they 'pinted Dick.

"Most o' the old riders remembers when he come into the world, but Dick's a Briscoe, Two Pair, an' you kin always bet on the Briscoe blood. He's growed ten years older tonight. I knew his maw, an' I wish her an' the capt'n could see him tonight, runnin' fifty riders in a ticklish pinch, steadyin' the wild ones, dealin' out the work fer the trusty old lizards, holdin' the town aboslute, an' no swagger or swellin' up 'bout him!"

The court-room was brightly lighted when I went in. The old colonel, his friend Mr. Sinclair, the parson, Judge Blackstock, Jefferson Brock, Jim and Steve were standing in a group. Behind them Tom and some of the boys were sitting. Over at one end of the attorney's table Bad Andy was entertaining Ruiz's lawyer, Jenkins.

In a few moments Bud Lacy came in with Ruiz. The greaser was not handcuffed, and he had not been abused or physically tortured, but old Bud had handled bad greasers for many years, and Ruiz had lost all of his insolent bravado.

Judge Blackstock took his old place on the bench. Bud Lacy called the court-room to order and proclaimed that court was now in session. Jefferson Brock, at the prosecutor's table, read an indictment he had prepared, charging Manuel Ruiz with the murder of Sickles Crim, and the trial began and went on as quietly and orderly as if everything had been regular.

When the parson was through testifying for the prosecution, Brock offered to turn him over to Jenkins for cross-examination, but that curly-maned lizard would have nothing to do with the proceedings, except to promise us all long terms in the penitentiary, boasting of the powers behind him.

When Judge Blackstock asked Ruiz if he had anything to say, the greaser slunk lower in his chair, his eyes fixed on the stern old judge's face. For a little he seemed

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unable to rise, then got to his feet, trembling with a fear that was horrible to see, his eyes still fixed on the judge, as if he wanted to look away, but dared not.

"I did not shoot at Sickles!" he said huskily. "I shot only at the horse!"

"So you shot at the horse?" the judge asked; his voice stern, but not unkind.

"Yes," gulped Ruiz. "I had bet much, and——"

"You shot at a horse, a horse running in a field at least one hundred feet below you, a horse with a rider bent low over his neck!" interrupted the judge.

"I shot only at the horse," repeated Ruiz. "I did not mean to kill Sickles. I had bet——"

His voice quavered to a stop, and he sank back into his chair, transfixed with terror.

"Manuel Ruiz, stand up and receive your sentence!"

The judge's voice burned through the greaser's cold fright, and he stood up.

"This court can not judge your motives, no earthly court can judge your heart," the judge began, "but the men of the mountains will judge your actions. They will send you to another court, a court which makes no mistakes, and which will judge your motives and your heart in sublime fairness. Tonight your shivering soul shall be held to answer before that supreme tribunal from the judgment of which there is no appeal! May God have mercy upon your soul!"

For many seconds the clock ticked into the solemn silence. Then Bud Lacy started for the door with Ruiz, quietly to carry out the sentence of the court beneath the great oak tree in the jail yard. But before the two had crossed the room, the door opened and a man staggered in.

Bad Andy and Jim ran to him, and in a moment we saw it was old Ed Baxter. While Andy and Jim kept him from falling, he tried to speak, but for a while no words came.

"Stop! For God's sake, stop!" he rasped at last. "Let the law take its course! In the name of all that is holy, give me back my manhood!"

THERE was dead silence again for a little while, then old Ed seemed to get his breath. He told us he had learned of the colonel's plans from Kate, and sick as he was, had eluded his guarding wife and daughter, and driven after us. Then he told a little of his story, of the torment through which he had passed, and begged again that, now that his order of release had been recovered, he be allowed to make a new order, holding Ruiz for trial for murder.

"But look here, Ed," said the judge, his old voice mighty kind, "if you do that they'll carry out their threat, and——"

"Let them do it!" interrupted old Ed, his voice breaking with agony. "I must make the new order. The other took away my honor, my oath, my manhood! I—we will face the disgrace. In God's name give me back my honor!"

"If the court pleases," we all looked from Ed to see Mr. Sinclair, the colonel's big gray friend, standing beside the lawyer's table, his voicé running even, smooth, low, and clear, "and Mr. Baxter does not object, I will volunteer to act as his counsel, as this appears to have taken on the form of a hearing."

Judge Blackstock was so astonished he could only nod, and old Ed seemed too bewildered to understand.

"My home is in the State of your birth, Mr. Baxter," that big gray lawyer went on, "the State where you made your mistake, where you served your term in prison, and perhaps that will help me to be of service. By the way, what was your mother's name?"

"Mrs. Ann Criswell Baxter, of Meadowfield," old Ed said, almost as if he were talking in his sleep.

"So you use your own name here?"

"Yes, I tried several while I was running away from the police, but when I came to California I took back my own," Ed answered, looking into the big lawyer's calm gray eyes as if he were seeing visions in them.

"At the time of your mother's death, some twenty years ago, she believed you were already dead," Mr. Sinclair observed.

"Yes," assented old Ed, almost eagerly. "I managed to get myself reported as dead in order to escape the officers trailing me as a fugitive. But—but how did you know?"

"It was many years ago," the big lawyer seemed almost musing aloud, "but I have always treasured the memory, for it so beautifully illustrated the sacred, spiritual quality of a mother's love. I happened to

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be attorney general of the State at the time, and one day a little old lady with trustful eyes and worn hands came to my office.

"Someway my clerk could not turn her away, and she came resolutely, but timidly into my private office, introducing herself as Mrs. Ann Criswell Baxter, of Meadowfield. She told me the story of her son, Edward Criswell Baxter, and asked that I secure a pardon for him.

"The notion was so odd—a pardon for a dead man — that I became interested, in spite of the fact that I could see no use in such a proceeding. But she insisted that she had little longer to live, and that she wanted the stain erased from her son's name while she was alive, so that she could tell him when she went to join him in the great beyond. It was entirely spiritual, but she was so much in earnest that I finally took up the matter with the governor, and recommended the granting of the pardon.

"While we were waiting for the governor to act, Mrs. Baxter wrote me a note, urging me to hurry, or it would be too late. I was very busy, and the governor was away just then, but the spirituality of her desire and appeal so gripped me, that I took time to call, in order to say personally that I would hurry the papers as fast as possible.

"I found her very ill, but she insisted upon receiving me. She was almost too weak to talk, knew she was dying, and begged me to hurry, to let her take peace to you. 'Peace to my boy's soul, on the wings of the morning!' were the words she kept murmuring."

"That was like mother," old Ed said huskily. "She always loved the morning. We had a hard time when I was little, and she kept father hopeful, and smoothed my boyhood sorrows with her prophecies of the wonderful things that would sometime come 'on the wings of the morning.' She always said that. Even when I was in prison she wrote me to prepare for the better times that were coming 'on the wings of the morning.' Poor mother, I'm afraid they never came for her," he ended, his voice breaking.

"It was already after midnight when I managed to reach the governor," went on Mr. Sinclair in that even, matter-of-fact voice, "and the dawn was close when I reached the house where your mother was dying. She was barely conscious. I read her the pardon, your pardon, and handed her the papers. She held them close, and a light that I can never forget came into her face, even though her eyes were closed. Then she spoke for the last time. 'Eddie,' she said, so softly that it was a caress, 'Eddie, I am coming with peace for you—coming with peace—on the wings of the morning!' "

Then that great lawyer who looked all gray ice on the outside, turned away from old Ed, as if his emotion were his own, sacred, and addressed Judge Blackstock.

"The mention of the name of Norman Quizell in this case brings up old memories of my own," he began, almost musingly, that wonderful evenness and balance still in his voice. And yet there was a power vibrating in it that pulled our eyes and attention from old Ed, and riveted them upon him. "For when I was a cub prosecutor, his was my first important conviction. Quizell was a man of marked cleverness, and real ability, but his energies were always directed in the wrong direction. I secured his conviction for the misappropriation of funds, but there were a number of charges against him.

"As you know, the jail failed to hold him. I remember at the time I wondered how Quizell ever managed to win any one's confidence, despite his cleverness, for his appearance was decidedly against him. He was clean enough, I suppose, but he was cadaverously thin, and looked clammy, and someway you felt that if you touched him he would feel slimey. His head was absolutely bald. Even his eyebrows were missing, and there was a dent as large as a man's index-finger in the top of his head. He looked so much like a reptile he was almost fascinating."

He talked casually, as if seeking to give old Ed a chance to master his emotions. When the big lawyer stopped he mused for a moment, studying the grain in the table top, then one of his long arms shot out, and he grabbed by the hair the cringing lawyer who had defended Ruiz—and all the hair came off. While we were catching our breath, he stripped the huge glasses from the nose of the lawyer called Jenkins, and we saw him for the first time as he was—absolutely bald, with no eyebrows, and a dent the size of an index-finger in the top of his gleaming pate!

"That was a fair disguise, Norman Quizell!" Mr. Sinclair said.

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His voice never lost its even clearness, but that slick crook who had defended Ruiz and tortured old Ed, shrank as if from a burning lash.

"So you are still at your old tricks," the big gray man mused on. "Well, your rope has been long, long enough for you to grow fat, but you have come to the end of it! Your name has never been written on a pardon. You will have to go back to the jail with which you have been threatening Edward Baxter!"

FOR an instant we were stunned. Then we wanted to yell. Bad Andy slammed his hat against the ceiling, and we all jumped up. I went through all the motions, but someway no whoop came. I guess the rest did just as I did, but I don't know, because I couldn't see.

After a little old Judge Blackstock got his spectacles shined to suit him. Someway it had taken him quite a while to get them just right.

"The findings of this court," he said, his voice husky, "have been reversed by that greater court which we all revere, the law! Will some one please bring Sheriff Walters as quickly as possible. This court stands adjourned."

When Joe Walters came in he got the straight of things mighty quick, and he hurried to shake hands with old Ed, who didn't see him, and then with Bud Lacy.

"My oath is the only thing that kept me from being with you from the start," he told Bud. "Say, would you mind helping me take this brace of poison snakes over to the jail!"

And the two went out with Ruiz and his lawyer.

Then the old colonel began to give hurried orders, for it was getting close to morning. He sent Jim with word for Dick and his riders to hold the town under their control until the skinners in their rigs had plenty of time to get a good start, and then for the riders to go quickly away, so there would be no chance for trouble.

"Two Pair," the colonel called to me, "take Ed home as quickly as you can. He has news for those who are waiting there. Mr. Sinclair and I will come with Tom."

When Steve and Andy helped old Ed into my buckboard he was in a sort of daze. We drove quietly through silent streets guarded by the old riders sitting their horses like statues in the dark before the dawn, and then we started for Casitas.

We were half-way there before Ed spoke. He sort of roused himself, and put his hand on my arm.

"Can't you hurry a little, Two Pair?" he asked, his voice low and broken. "I must get home! I've something to tell Jane and——"

"Singin' snakes! But don't I know it!" I exploded. "The whip's been swingin' and those pintos have had their bellies stretched close to the ground ever since we started!"

He was silent again, while miles rattled and bumped by, and those four wild pintoes tried to climb through their collars to freedom. The new day came into the sky. It was still dark under the oaks, but away off to the right old Topa Topa changed from a gray mystery into a throne of crimson and gold. Right overhead we looked so far into the blue of the sky that it hurt.

The sun climbed nearer the rim of the range while the pintos dashed on, flecking us with foam from their quarters. Cloud streamers drifting above the peaks became bars of fire, and then were transformed into bands of gleaming gold, lying one above another, until a golden stair stretched to the infinite heights of the heavens. Happy sunbeams hurried to wake the Sleeping Giant, and the great mountain seemed to smile, and to urge anew his counsel of sublime peace. A little breeze fanned the oaks awake, and they murmured of the dawns of other centuries.

"Janie," murmured old Ed, using his pet name for his wife, "Janie—peace is coming—coming at last—coming on the wings of the morning!"

As my team swung the turn just below old Ed's home, I thought I saw a figure under an oak that commanded a view of the road for a little way, but someway it seemed more like a spirit than a human being. Wondering a little, I stopped my team in front of the house, and old Ed clambered out and hurried up the walk at a tottering run. The door opened, and he disappeared inside.

Wondering if I had really seen anything under the oak, I looked back. Kate Baxter was there, but so worn and wan that I had to look long to make sure it was

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really Kate, and not her spirit. Evidently she had been watching the road, waiting, hoping, fearing. I started over to tell her she had better go in, that her father had news, and she had turned to meet me, when we both stopped to listen.

Through the stillness throbbed the hoof-beats of a madly running horse. They grew louder with amazing swiftness, and seemingly in an instant Dick Briscoe's magnificent chestnut, gray with foam, flashed under the oaks. Dick did not take time to stop, swinging out of his saddle with the great horse in full stride.

"Kate!" he called, running to her, and the light in her eyes shamed the new sun.

I hurried away, for I had witnessed a transfiguration, and that was holy ground.

UNDECORATED

BY JAMES V. MURRAY

I'D NOT detract from the glory
That's due to the heroes brave,
Who are sung of in song and in story;
Who dare—to the brink of the grave.
All honor to soldiers and sailors,
In uniforms khaki and blue.
Proclaim as their country's saviors
Those courageous warriors, true.
But I sing of another hero,
Who wears grimy dungarees,
And tries the red maw of a freighter
Its hunger for coal to appease.
'Twas only last week that the *Jersey*
Was towed into port by the *Brown*,
With tubes split and steam-line bursted,
And all of her crown-sheets down.
As soon as the vessel was docked, sir,
An ambulance arrived on the scene.
The mate was telling a reporter,
And this was all I could glean:

That all of the firemen but Scully
Had jumped for their lives at the burst;
But Scully he stayed behind, sir.
That's why he got scalded the worst.
It's only a scalded fire-boy;
Caught in a scathe of steam.
'Twas Scully who shut off the valves, boy,
When the rest ran away with a scream.
His body's a solid blister——

No glory for him to gain—
Just a little bouquet from his sister,
As he moans on his bed of pain.

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Two Fighting Men

by H. Keith Trask

MIKE SLATTERY, loitering on the string-piece of the Eagle Line pier, was shamefully neglecting business. Half his pile of morning papers lay beside him unsold, but Mike had not hesitated between vulgar money and his only love.

The S. S. *Montezuma* was scheduled to sail on the high water at 11 A.M. Mike's eyes were riveted on her manifold perfections, save when his gaze wandered to his paternal ancestor, loafing with the camel gang at the outboard end of the pier. At those times he reflected that the longshoremen would be paid off after the ship sailed and that it would then be possible for him to slip in and visit with his mother.

After pay-day the old man never went home while he had a cent, and Mike and his father were never under the same roof if Mike could avoid it. During his parent's periods of comparative sobriety Mike lived elsewhere; chiefly inhabiting an empty packing-case or the soft side of a cotton bale somewhere along West Street.

Despite his irregular and reprehensible habits of life, his ragged exterior and his scanty book-learning—composed chiefly of the ability to read, write and make short change—the fire of a great desire burned in Mike's seventeen-year-old soul. And the shrine of that desire was housed deep in the *Montezuma's* hold.

He turned back from long range view of Mike senior's battle-scarred countenance to contemplation of the ship's high, black hull. The brass rims of a triple row of port-holes winked at him mockingly in the morning sun. But it was not the habitations of first-cabin passengers that called to Mike. Low down along the water-line, turgid streams gushed from manifold orifices. Condenser outboard discharge, sanitary discharges, Mike could name them all and it was at their source that he dwelt in spirit, if not in fact.

Close beside him, the first cabin gangway, its side-rails masked by snowy canvas, sloped upward from pier to promenade-deck. At its head stood a trim quartermaster, scanning every person who boarded the ship. Mike beheld him without envy. That guy belonged to the deck; where it was cold in Winter and you stood to the bridge four hours on end, staring at a compass-card and twisting a little brass wheel a spoke at a time this way and that.

That was all well enough. But you could twist that wheel all day and nothing would happen, were it not for the other guys who kept the great propellers whirling over the countless miles between New York and Liverpool.

Then an early arriving, nervous old lady passenger asked the quartermaster foolish question number 1,926 from the door of the first cabin entrance. The quartermaster, required by the line to be courteous in his dealings with its patrons, hastened to her side to assure her that in these piping days of peace—this was long before the first tin fish scourged the seas—it was totally superfluous for the *Montezuma's* passengers to wear life-belts throughout the trip. For perhaps a minute the gangway was left unguarded.

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The time was long enough for Mike Slattery to jerk his papers under his arm, bend double and run up it, his progress hidden by the canvas weather-cloth. He reached the promenade-deck, turned aft and rounded the corner of the house like a dart of light, slipped down the ladder to the after well-deck, dived into a long passage and came out in the after saloon. It was deserted and Mike crossed it boldly. Having been there before, he knew exactly where he was going and reached his goal without discovery.

For the edification of those who like to see the wheels go 'round, glass windows had been let into the engine-room well on the main-deck. There was not a great deal visible certainly; only the concentric ringed heads of the three cylinders with the tail-rods sticking through them and a pump against the after bulkhead, but it was something. Mike, with his nose pressed against the glass, could catch tantalizing suggestions of polished connecting-rods and air-pump levers through the bars of the upper grating.

The hum of dynamo and fan engines, the thud of a feed-pump came muffled to his ears and with these sounds the thin, shrill notes of an oiler's whistle as he went about his work; the song of an under priest in the temple. Presently, the holy one ascended the ladder to the grating. His pæan of praise was distinct in the listener's ears as, clad in his priestly robes of dungarees and singlet, he performed the rite of swabbing the pump piston-rods.

Upon him attended an acolyte, a youngster of about Mike's age or, perhaps, a year older. Mike admired, envied, and hated that boy who leaned against the water-chamber and spoke in the oiler's ear. The oiler, his head cocked sidewise, listened and laughed, clapping him on the shoulder as if in approval of the report, tale of shore-leave or confidence of love of which he had been the recipient. And Mike Slattery, gazing upon that other kid who moved so confident and unimpressed in those hallowed regions, yearned to know by what unparalleled stroke of fortune that duck was in the *Montezuma's* engine-room.

The youngster glanced up and saw Mike's eager face pressed against the glass. He touched the oiler on the shoulder, pointed and laughed. Thereafter, he made imperative and officious motions commanding Mike to go away from there. Mike, adjusting thumb and fingers to his nose in a world-old gesture of contumely, expressed thereby as well as inarticulately he was able some of the feelings that racked him.

Suddenly the other kid put his fingers to his lips and blew a call shrill enough to be heard through the glass, then pointed again at Mike. Mike shook his fist.

Simultaneously, a thumb and forefinger clasped his right ear and a cockney voice spoke into that same ear.

" 'Ey, you perishin' blighter, wot're you doin' 'ere?"

"Aw, I ain't doin' nothin', on'y look at the engines," Mike protested, twisting around to face his captor.

"Ayn't you now! 'Ow do Hi know wot you've been an' picked up? Blimey, wot'll you dock-rats be a doin' next?"

So saying, the stateroom steward proceeded to frisk Mike with a dexterity that suggested that, in his earlier career, he had not always himself followed the paths of rectitude.

He found nothing contraband. Nevertheless he retained his hold on Mike's ear and propelled him to the gangway and thence ashore, deaf to frantic protests.

"Nice stite of haffairs w'en a bloomin' bundle of ol' clo'es like you comes messin' inter the saloon. Hi'll just bally well 'and you hover to the bobby at the gyte," he decreed, which he did, with a lurid tale of having found Mike in an unlocked stateroom.

"You know me, Mr. Hogan. I didn't go to pinch nothin'—honest I didn't. I only went to have a slant at the engines," Mike asserted earnestly.

The cop regarded the steward with a hostile eye.

"Sure I know you," he agreed. "He's 'Slattery the Bum's' kid," he added to the steward. "He wouldn't pinch anythin'. Leave go his ear, you rummy!"

Then he exhorted Mike, waving his club suggestively.

"Beat it outa here before I fan youse. And keep away from these ships or I'll take youse to the house to talk to the sarje!"

MANY times while the *Montezuma* was gone did Mike's thoughts turn vengefully to that boy in her engine-room. He hated that boy, not only because he was already where Mike would give his hope of salvation to be, but also because

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he had been the unnecessary instrument of depriving Mike Slattery of his greatest pleasure in life. He would know that kid anywhere and if opportunity ever arose . . . .

Occasional days of perfect bliss had come to Mike aboard the tug *Guiding Star*. His uncle Denny Forgan was her engineer and from him Mike had learned all that he knew of ships' engines and the ways of the men who run them. At one period in his career, Denny had been third in a British tramp.

Denny had promised that as soon as Mike was old enough and husky enough, he should have a chance at firing on the tug. But now the *Guiding Star*, or even those sea-going aristocrats of tugdom that carry on their stacks the badge of Standard Oil or a railroad company seemed small and mean and utterly beneath his notice. Besides, Mike doubted that Denny would survive the ravages of mixed ale long enough to redeem his promise.

He would be a deep-water man in a liner, the *Montezuma*, no less. But how would he get there? The shipping offices had no use for boys. They wanted men with hair on their chests; men who could wield eighteen-foot slice-bars in the pitiless heat of the open furnace doors, men who could trim bunker coal in the dim radiance of flaring slush-lamps. They wanted men who emerged at the end of a trip to carouse royally in shore-front hotels and spit black from dust-clogged lungs.

And for him only to set foot on the *Montezuma's* deck was to hazard arrest as a vagrant. But there was a way and he would find it. Maybe that other kid had pull. Let him. Where he could go, Mike could follow. Lying on a cotton bale under the soft Summer sky, he raised his arms starward.

"By ——, I'll be a chief before I'm done wit'—they can't stop me!" he vowed.

IT WAS the night of the *Montezuma's* arrival, after having logged the fastest westward passage as yet on record—six days and some hours. Mike's bale was under the shadow of her lofty bow, looming above the pier sheds. It was very late and West Street was deserted. Here and there, telltale gleams of light leaked past the tightly drawn shutters of a gin-mill.

Occasional footfalls of patrolman or dock-guard, or the hoarse blare of a whistle on the river served only to intensify Mike's conviction of solitariness. In all this sleeping world there was not one friendly hand to help him to his goal. But he didn't need any hand. He had always worked for and by himself, solely and ruthlessly.

Uncertain footfalls and a lilting love-ditty, as performed by one who had dined not altogether wisely, smote upon the quiet. A slight figure garbed in white came out of a side street and picked an unsteady, diagonal way toward the entrance of the *Montezuma's* pier. Mike sat up on his cotton bale, his muscles tensed and his eyes narrowed. His hour had arrived sooner than he could have dared to hope.

"The blame fool, comin' back to the ship loaded," he muttered. "I bet I sober him up before he gets by me!"

Low, hoarse mutterings at the other end of the pile of bales startled him to wariness. A hawklike beak, projecting from ambush was, like himself, intent upon the songster's progress. Mike instantly dropped out of sight, lying flat with a muffled oath.

Fate had taken matters out of his hands. It would be extremely unwise to interfere with "Sheeny Jake" and "Harry the Mutt" when despoiling a victim. Oh, well, they would do a completer job than Mike Slattery could and that fresh, high-nosed duck had it coming to him. Blow Mike to a steward and get him pinched, would he!

The white uniform rounded the bales and steadied its course for the pier entrance. Sheeny Jake confronted its owner, the Mutt lurking in the shadow.

"Wot's the time, Cap?" the Sheeny inquired in a tone meant to be confidence inspiring.

However, there was something about Jake that drove the alcohol fumes from the reveler's head.

"I haven't got the time," he answered boldly, making as if to pass on.

Mike did not intend to interfere, but there was no law against seeing his enemy get what was coming to him. He rolled noiselessly over and over the bales until he was looking directly down upon the proceedings. The Sheeny darted forth a dirty hand and plucked at a gold chain looped across the rumpled white tunic.

"Guess yer forgot this," he grinned, jerking at it.

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"Drop that, you!" snapped its owner, then struck at the Sheeny's face.

Jake was a practised exponent of the art of rough and tumble, but he suddenly found himself very busy. He gave ground, guarding as best he could, seemingly against a dozen arms, each equipped with an efficient punch.

Mike sat up on his bale in an ecstasy.

"Some scrapper, kiddo! That's the i'—hand it to him right!" he exhorted softly.

"Hey—Mutt—why'n —— doncher—get to him!" the Sheeny panted in exasperation.

Harry the Mutt's lead pipe had been fouled in his pocket, requiring some seconds for clearance. Now, with its deadly length upraised, he rushed to reinforce.

Mike jumped to his feet. That kid might be fresh and high-nosed, but he wasn't going to let him be done up by a ham with a lead pipe. For just a second he wavered, pondering possible unpleasant consequences from the wrath of Sheeny Jake and his gang, then with a yell that woke the echoes for blocks, he launched himself upon the Mutt.

Again he yelled, both hands clinched on the wrist that gripped the pipe, kicking fiercely at the Mutt's shins. In the distance a night-stick pounded upon flagging. Heavy, flat feet clumped rapidly near. The Sheeny and Mutt suddenly abandoned their enterprise and departed. When Officer Hogan puffed up, he found only one youngster setting to rights a sadly deranged Eagle Line Summer uniform, while another youngster stared at him with hostile eyes.

"What's doin'?" the cop inquired between labored breaths.

"Dis duck blew along wit' a snootfull and a coupla stick-ups tried to get to him," Mike explained.

"Who was they?" the law demanded.

"Whaddaya t'ink I am?" Mike queried with withering scorn.

"Looks like you was around kinda handy yourself, Mike Slattery," the officer insinuated.

"Oh, he's all right," the other youngster broke in quickly. "He helped me a lot to lick them."

"Helped!" Mike snorted. "Helped! But for his help——"

"All right." Hogan flourished his stick, about to depart. "You better keep sober at night around here, young feller," he counseled, and walked away.

"Slattery, I'm obliged to you for butting in," said the uniformed youngster in a patronizing tone.

"Aw, ferget it," Mike requested, kicking at a cotton bale in a sudden fit of embarrassment.

"But I am," the other persisted, fishing suggestively in his pocket. "My name is George Barker. I'm on the *Montezuma* and——"

"I know, I seen you in her engine-room," Mike interrupted. Then on an uncontrollable impulse, burst out, "Say, how didja get there?"

"I'm an engine-room apprentice, learning the business," Barker explained.

"Say, I wanna be one, too," Mike answered eagerly.

"You!" Barker checked an impulse to laugh. "It's quite a job to get in. You have to wait for a vacancy and the examination is hard," he asserted patronizingly.

"Whadda you mean—hard?" Mike growled, nettled by the tone.

"You have to know things, mathematics and all that," Barker elucidated. "You have to be educated."

"I wouldn't stand no show then," Mike decided gloomily. "Ain't there no other way a guy like me could learn the business?"

Young Mr. Barker felt mellowed toward this waif. It pleased him to pose as a philanthropist. He considered Mike thoughtfully.

"Our junior mess is short a boy. If you were cleaned up, you might do," he decided. "You'd have to wait on the table and make beds and all that."

"Would I have any chance to be near the engines?" Mike queried.

"You'd take coffee to the watch in the early morning, that's about all," Barker answered.

"Lead me to it," Mike requested instantly.

"Ask for me on the ship at eight in the morning," Barker directed. "I'll take you to the chief and fix you up. But don't say anything about how we met, will you. You know how it is when a fellow gets out with his friends."

"I ain't got any friends," Mike Slattery asserted.

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ON THE rail of a tender headed across the River Mersey from the *Montezuma* to the Liverpool landing stage, perched two junior engineers, smoking their pipes. They were bound for an afternoon and evening of relaxation ashore. Extra Third Engineer Michael Aloysius Slattery intended to stroll about the city and later repair to Birkenhead for tea with the first assistant and his hospitable family.

Mike squinted back at the lessening hull of the ship. For six years she had been his only home and his only love. Obsolescent now and beaten by younger rivals, her records a thing of the past, the *Montezuma* nevertheless shared not with woman nor any man Mike Slattery's love and allegiance.

He thought of those years with a proud swelling of the heart. How he had hated being a ship's flunkey! When he rolled out of bed in the early morning to take coffee to the men of the graveyard watch at two bells, they had had to drive him out of the engine-room, back to the hateful tasks of table-serving and bed-making and errand-running. Messboy Slattery had soon acquired the reputation of asking technical questions that stumped the junior engineers to answer.

He had been reviled for being caught studying in books that he borrowed from Barker and the other apprentices, to the great detriment of his legitimate pursuits. He had made himself a pest to the chief and the first assistant by his everlasting demands to be given a chance. At last, he had won his chance. He had forced them to appoint him to a vacant apprenticeship.

The rest had been easy to the boy who had sworn an oath under the stars in West Street. Barker and the others had laughed at him for staying aboard to study when his mates were playing ashore. But in one year he was even with Barker, so far as knowledge of the work was concerned. In four, there was not a man in the ship, save the chief himself, who had the "feel" of the engines as had Mike Slattery. They were part of him and he of them, blood of his blood and bone of his bone.

Today he was entitled to serve as first assistant in any tonnage on any ocean. Soon he would be certified as chief. True he knew only engines and boilers. Softer things, the refinements of life meant nothing to him. He had never mastered more mathematics than was necessary to pass the inspectors' examinations. But he knew his business and his instinct for steam supplied all the deficiencies of his book-learning. He had done what he set out to do and he had done it himself. What help he had needed, he had taken. He owed no obligation. "Get it yourself or go without," had become his motto; his god, the power that bridges the seas.

George Barker touched his arm as the tender neared the stage.

"Ever see anything travel like that before, Mike?"

Mike followed the pointing finger with his eyes. Down-river a white spot of creaming spray was approaching at amazing speed. There was a glimpse of gray hull and a squat stack from which billowed a cloud of black smoke.

"I never did. I wonder what's drivin' her," he answered. "She's makin' forty, if a knot."

The tender bumped the stage. While the lines were being made fast, the mystery boat shot past, sheered inshore and tied up to the stage further on.

"Let's take a look at that packet," Mike suggested when they had landed.

Barker assented and they strolled up to her.

Three grimy men were lounging on the little, gray-hulled vessel's deck. Mike hailed them.

"Hey, buddies, what kind of coffee-mill you got in that thing?"

"Turbine," answered one, grinning up at him.

"Turbine? I never heard they'd got one to work!" Mike exclaimed.

"This one works, mate. As you might ha' seen had you been looking," the man on deck responded.

"We was lookin'," Mike assured him. "That's why we'd like a slant at that turbine. We're engineers ourselves—on the *Montezuma*."

The grimy hand hopped up on the engine-hatch, the better to scan the landing-stage.

"We ain't supposed to show it, mate," he stated dubiously. "There'd be trouble if skipper came back and caught you. He's the inventor. However, I don't see him and I guess they'll take no harm from ye. Come aboard!"

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To the non-technical eye, the engine-room of the little *Turbinia* would have revealed only the long, tapering cylindrical boxes that housed her enormous power and the ordinary auxiliary machinery. But Mike Slattery had entered a land of enchantment. To his innumerable eager questions their grimy host gave prideful answer, ever casting an uneasy eye toward the landing-stage and plainly fearful of the skipper-inventor's return.

All too soon, Mike felt obliged to withdraw, but from the landing-stage he continued his talk with the *Turbinia's* chief.

"I tell ye, mates, the reciprocatin' engine's doomed," the chief asserted solemnly. "Yon's the power o' the future. In your time and mine the liners'll be engined wi' 'em. Under five days they'll do it, from here to New York. And when it's done, remember what I telled ye!"

"Let's hunt a snug pub and have about seven drinks before you go to Birkenhead," Barker suggested as they walked away.

"I don't want any drinks," Mike answered shortly. "Here's my car."

He boarded it and left Barker heading for his pub.

There had never been any real friendship between Barker and Mike. Always, a covert feeling of repulsion and hostility had existed on both sides. In the beginning, Barker had regarded Mike as a protégé. Later, when the street boy began to show his ability the feeling of patronage had changed to jealous resentment. But Barker was essentially a diplomat and he found nobody on the ship so willing as Mike Slattery to help him hide his numerous peccadilloes from the chief.

For his part, Mike had never outgrown the sentiments engendered by his first encounter with Barker through the glass windows of the engine-room. But he had instantly perceived in the other man a handy vehicle to help him along and he had shamelessly played upon and used Barker's weaknesses, his selfish vanity and propensity for conviviality.

He had made Barker believe that Mike Slattery looked up to him as a mathematical genius, for it was in helping him there that Barker had proved most useful. Today Barker was third assistant, in charge of the watch where Mike was still but junior.

THROUGHOUT the tea with the first's family, Mike was silent and preoccupied. He said good night and returned to the ship early, full of what he had seen and heard that afternoon. The English engineer's prophecy had fired his imagination. He believed in its truth, but he foresaw certain difficulties. Arrived on the ship, he procured pencil and paper and then sat down at the mess-room table, absorbed in rough sketches of turbine gear.

The lilt of an unprintable sea chantey jarred him out of his absorption. He raised his head with an angry frown as Barker staggered into the mess-room and fell upon a bench.

"Drunk again, my hearty!" Barker roared. "Oh, what a snug little pub!"

"Shut up, you fool—the chief's in his room!" Mike snapped.

It would serve Barker right to have the old man land on him, but it mustn't occur. For now more than ever before, had Barker become essential to Mike Slattery's plans. Therefore, he abandoned his sketches for that night and coaxed his noisy senior to bed.

Next day, he found the *Turbinia* again at the stage and put to her chief many crafty and purposeful questions. The man was intelligent and enthusiastic and had been in the confidence of the inventor from the beginning. From him Mike learned all that he wished to know.

Half-way home to New York, he drew Barker aside in their off-watch time.

"George, you know that turbine boat we was aboard of in Liverpool," he began. "And you heard the dope her chief handed out. Did it strike you that there was one big weak spot?"

"Are you goin' to try to beat Parsons at his own game?" Barker sneered.

"Maybe I am," Mike assented tranquilly. "Anyway, I've thought of somethin' that he hasn't."

"Pass out the latest," Barker requested with a bored air, drumming with his fingers on the mess-table.

"The turbine is the comin' way to drive a ship, we'll admit that," Mike premised. "Now a reciprocatin' engine drives a big propeller slow, but a turbine drives a little propeller fast. The turbine has to go fast by nature, consequently the propeller has to be small."

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"Out of the mouths of babes and suckers," Barker murmured.

"Now the small fast propeller's all right for a little boat like the *Turbinia*, or maybe a torpedo-boat destroyer," Mike went on, paying no heed to Barker's gibing air. "But when you come to big ships like this one, or the new Cunarders, it's a different proposition. They'll have to stick on a bunch of little propellers whirlin' like blazes and the turbines won't show the economy and efficiency they'd ought. Slip and all that stuff will come in mighty bad."

"Yes, Bobby Fulton, Junior, but what's the answer?" Barker drawled, still drumming.

"Reducin'-gear between turbine and propeller. The turbine goes fast like it ought and the propeller goes slow enough to be designed just right. Them guys has thought about it, but they figure that a reducin'-gear is bound to strip and give way under the strain of the screw racin' in a seaway."

"And so do I—and so do I," Barker chanted.

"It won't if you make it a floatin' gear that automatically compensates the extra shock when the screw plunges back into solid water," Mike countered, drawing a sketch from his pocket. "Take a slant at that."

Barker studied the sketch long and intently. His lips puckered into a noiseless whistle and he rubbed his chin.

"By the holy thrust-block, I believe you've hit it!" he muttered at length, very slowly and giving Mike a queer look.

"I know I've hit it," Mike affirmed. "My trouble is that I can't do the heavy calculatin'. You'll have to do it, George."

He reached over and gripped Barker's arm.

"Mind now," he went on with deadly seriousness. "You do the figurin' and I'll give you half of anythin' I make. But it's my idea and my name goes on it. You're only the hired man. I want Mike Slattery to give marine engineerin' the biggest improvement since multiple-expansion engines was designed. You do your work and get your pay.

"But if you try to cross me and hog the credit," Mike went on, his eyes boring into Barker and the hand tightening its grip. "If you make a single move toward any monkey business, I'll kill you as sure as this old *Montezuma* is under us right now!"

"Cut the fifth act, Mickey and let me figure on this rig a while," Barker laughed, folding and pocketting the sketch.

Then, abruptly, he rose and walked away.

Mike looked after him with the dawn of a great doubt in his face. Had he been foolish to trust Barker? But George wouldn't dare—they were right together in the same ship. If he did . . . .

During the rest of the trip Barker made evasive answers every time Mike inquired how the figuring was going. He explained that the theory of the design required special information that would not be available to him until he could reach the public library in New York. He added that he was not at all sure that the idea was practical.

All the difficulties might be real, Mike realized. However, he suspected more strongly with every passing hour that Barker was magnifying them and doing everything in his power to discourage the inventor. Mike kept his suspicions to himself, but he watched Barker with grim persistence.

Barker was in fact devoting his time to pondering how he could eliminate Mike. Time enough to figure out the gear when he had disposed of this Irish roughneck who had dropped upon a good thing by pure chance.

Of course Barker could claim the invention as his own and probability would argue in his favor. Mike was known as a practical man, not a theorist. However, this might lead to many complications. Barker did not fear Mike's threats of physical violence, but he did fear that a rival claimant would greatly depreciate the gear's market value. Consequently, Mike must be totally eliminated as a factor. To do that short of murder was a poser, but Barker was confident that he would find a way.

Passing the Banks, the old *Montezuma* ran head on into a gale of wind. The skipper bucked her through it until she shipped a sea over the starboard bow that stove in the forward deck-house, and ratched up on the bridge, carrying away rails, engine-room telegraph, voice-pipes and steering-gear. Thereupon, he slowed down until repairs were made to the steering-gear and temporary communication reestablished with the engine-room.

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THUS it happened that when the ship came abreast of her North River pier and the tugs took hold to swing and dock her, all signals to the starboard engine came down on an antiquated gong and must be caught by ear alone. It was a crude arrangement, the wire that operated the gong leading upward alongside the cylinders, through the skylight and thence forward to the bridge.

Third Engineer Barker had the watch and Extra Third Engineer Michael Slattery stood at throttle and reverse-gear, his ears wide open for the cracked signals of the gong. As the tugs wrestled with the ship in the tideway, the bridge helped out by using her own power; backing or going ahead on either or both engines as the case might require.

Moving about the engine-room, Barker was able to follow the progress of the docking with fair accuracy from the signals that came down. Once, too, he slipped up on the fiddley to see for himself how soon she would be headed into the slip. In that makeshift signal arrangement, George Barker had found inspiration. Returning from his scouting trip, he invented an errand that would take the oiler of the watch down the shaft-alley for a few minutes. Then he took his stand on the upper grating, his fingers loosely grasping the gong wire.

Presently, as he had anticipated, the gong rang once. Instantly, Barker jerked a second stroke, transforming "slow ahead" into "astern." He was safe enough. The slack wire would convey to the bridge no hint of what he had done. He heard the whine of the reverse-gear, the cranks began to revolve with increasing velocity.

The gong rang once—"stop!"—sharp and imperative. But the damage had been done. In the engine-room, they did not even feel the shock as the *Montezuma's* bow, flung to starboard by the backing engine and carried also by the strong tide, crumpled a tug against the pier. The tug's crew escaped, but that did not help Mike Slattery when the chief stormed into the engine-room; nor later when the inspectors sat in judgment upon his lapse.

"I got two bells, honest I did," Mike vowed to the chief.

"There was only one bell," George Barker admitted with seeming reluctance. "I was on the upper grating and did not notice which way the engines were turning I trusted Mr. Slattery."

To the inspectors Mike alleged that he was the victim of a frame-up. He proved how it could have been done and why. The evidence was all against him, however, and his accusation against his superior reacted unfavorably upon his case. Barker was reprimanded for not remaining beside the starting-gear; but Mike Slattery's license was cancelled for three years.

After the hearing, Barker sought Mike and returned the original sketch of the turbine reducing-gear.

"I've decided that there's nothing in this, Slattery," said he.

Mike grinned with back-drawn lips that showed his teeth.

"No doubt your own sketches are better. When you've done the work I hired you for, I'll be around after it, George!"

Some men would have started a hopeless fight to regain possession of their own. Not so Mike Slattery. He found work with a dry-dock company and bided his time. Eventually, Barker would perfect the gear, then would Mike collect all that was due him.

For a year Barker remained in the *Montezuma*. Then he was summarily dismissed at Liverpool for being drunk on duty, Mike heard later. Still he made no move, but he found means to keep track of Barker's movements. He had become a silent, self-centered man who made no friends nor even acquaintances and occupied his leisure hours with reading certain scientific journals. One night toward the end of the second year he found an item that kept him staring at the wall of his bedroom until morning.

The term of suspension passed away and Mike immediately applied for reinstatement. He was going out to find Barker and see how his job was getting along. The hired man must be nearly finished with it by now.

There was not much American shipping in those days and sea-going berths were scarce, yet Mike found one within the week; in a dismal old tramp chartered to carry steel rails from Newport News to Argentina. He shipped as first assistant under Chief George Barker. From the office he went directly aboard the ship to report.

The chief was leaning over some papers

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on the desk in his little room when Mike entered.

"Hello, George, how are you getting along with my gear?" he inquired.

Barker raised a face reddened and coarsened by dissipation. Rage and hate there were in his eyes, but no fear of the man whom he had wronged.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in a harsh voice.

"I'm the new first," Mike told him cheerily. "Just got back the ticket you took away from me. Them plans finished? You've had time enough!"

"Oh, that! I never thought of it again!" Barker laughed unpleasantly.

"You lie!" Mike Slattery answered.

"Look here, mister, if you're my first don't talk to me that way!" Barker blustered. "You better get on ashore. I don't want a lunatic anyhow!"

"I'm shipped now and you'd have to prove me nutty before you can get rid of me," Mike pointed out. "Where are them plans? I want 'em."

"They're where you'll never find them!" Barker grated, staring at him defiantly.

Mike Slattery laughed his bare-fanged laugh.

"Oh, yes, I will, George. They're with you and I'll find 'em all right. After that, some dark night——"

He finished by an expressive jerk of the head toward the rail.

Ensued a moment of silence, then Barker laughed in his turn.

"Talk like that doesn't scare me, Mr. Slattery."

Mike moved toward the door.

"Oh, well, lots of things can happen between here and Buenos," he philosophized. "I'll turn to now—Chief."

The old *Carolina* sailed the following morning. Barker had not been ashore and Mike argued therefrom that the plans must be aboard her. That night when he came off watch at eight o'clock, the ship was nosing sluggishly through a quiet sea. The dead-weight of four thousand tons of railroad steel made her logy.

The chief's door was locked when he tried it softly. Mike peered through the slatted window and made out that Barker was sitting at his desk with some drawings before him and a whisky bottle at his elbow. Mike withdrew, to lie in his bunk alert and watchful until six bells sounded from the bridge. Then he returned to Barker's door, listened, caught the sound of heavy, regular breathing and a whiff of alcohol smote his nostrils.

Except for a lookout man in the bows, the deck was deserted. Mike produced a small implement that he had spent the better part of two watches in fashioning. The chief's door swung open, he entered, shut it behind him and switched on the light.

Barker, stretched on his back, moved and thrust an arm across his face as the light went on, but he did not waken. Mike searched the place thoroughly. The plans were not there. Yet Barker had been looking at them. Again he searched. No, he had not missed any possible hiding-place. He turned off the light and went away.

Where had his enemy hidden those drawings? In vain he taxed his imagination, in vain he searched out-of-the-way corners and spied upon the chief for nearly a week. Barker knew he was at it, Mike told him so; reminded him also of the hour of reckoning once the plans were found, hoping thus to break the chief's nerve. But Barker only laughed at him.

DAWNED a morning when the old *Carolina* wallowed in a heavy ground-swell. A lid of coppery-dun cloud clamped down tight all around the horizon. The day wore on and the ground-swell waxed with an ugly cross set to it. Shortly, the badly-secured top layer of rails broke away and shifted, listing her heavily to starboard. With every roll more of the lengths slid and skidded about; to fetch up at last against the side with terrific force. If wind struck them now—and wind was inevitable—the *Carolina* must surely sink.

The skipper called all hands and asked for volunteers to enter the hold and do what they could. Three men responded. the first officer, the chief engineer and his first assistant. A rail caught Barker and broke his leg. Mike carried the chief up the ladder on his back and laid him in his bunk. The skipper administered what aid lay in his power, Mike helping.

Much as he hated the man and great as the wrongs he had suffered from him, he found himself giving Barker a grudging meed of admiration now. He was certainly

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a fighter. The pain must have been excruciating, but not so much as a single groan escaped the white, set lips.

The list grew worse. Toward dark, the ship went on her beam ends, leaking. The barometer was down out of sight. The engines lay idle and useless, the fires were dead under the boilers. Black gang and deck crew huddled together, scanning the empty sea with frightened, hopeless eyes. Mike Slattery, foreseeing the end, busied himself with private affairs atop the midship deck-house.

Then the skipper gave the order to abandon her while yet there was a chance to launch the boats unsmashed. They might weather the gale. The ship was inevitably a tomb. At the order, Mike entered Barker's room, to find him conscious.

"They're leavin' her, George," Mike remarked. "You better gimme them plans."

"Go to ——!" growled his enemy.

"Not me. That's where you're bound," Mike retorted. "No ship's boat'll live through the wind that's comin'. The weather'll save me the trouble of bumpin' you off."

"If I go, you go and the plans go with us," Barker pointed out. "But I'll take 'em with me, Mike Slattery."

"I ain't goin' to drown," Mike contradicted cheerily. "No ship's boat in mine! I got a private cab waitin'—a nice, seaworthy life-raft that'll bob over the biggest of them like a cork. All stocked with food and water, too—for one. I'll take my time and go away from here when she drops from under."

"If you stay, I stay," Barker vowed doggedly. "I've got to drown anyhow, so I'll have the satisfaction of seeing her take the plans where you won't get them. I've always hated you, Mike Slattery, and played you for a sucker!"

"Same here," Mike agreed tranquilly. "Only I wasn't the sucker, because I seen what you was up to. And you're kiddin' yourself about them plans, George. You'll hand 'em over."

Barker laughed, then turned his face to the wall. When men came to carry him to a boat, he stubbornly refused to be moved. There was no time to argue. They left him there, nor did they notice in their mad haste that the first assistant engineer was also missing.

Watching the boats pull away, Mike Slattery laughed. They were manned by puny inefficients, making a last futile struggle to save their useless lives. While he . . . .

The ship was low in the water, sinking fast. Far to seaward, the line where cloud and water met was broken and contorted. The wind was on the way, and he had yet to find his plans. First, better make certain that his raft was all right.

A great hush brooded over the *Carolina* as he climbed to the top of the house. The heaving swells ran softly along her exposed flank and lipped the slanting deck with the purling hiss of surf on strand. She was settling by the head and her end was very near.

The light, too, was failing. Mike tested the lashings of the stores on his raft, then about to descend to the main-deck, halted, staring. Something was moving down there; a man was clawing a painful way up the steep slope to the rail by elbows and one knee. The other leg trailed broken and useless behind him. He reached the rail and dragged along it, forward to where the bridge stanchions met the deck.

A life-buoy hung there, one of the common cork rings. Attached to it by a length of light line was a small metal cylinder containing a chemical compound that would flare up when the cap was torn off. Barker cut the buoy loose and passed it over his head, then lashed the cylinder around his waist. Mike sat down on the edge of the house to watch.

So George's nerve had broken at last. He didn't want to die, would make his own pitifully puny fight against it. And what a fighter the man was! Again there surged over him that wave of unwilling admiration. Almost as good a fighter as himself.

The crippled man clawed back along the rail until he was abreast the door of his room. There he let go and slid down to the opening.

A low, moaning roar drew Mike's eyes momentarily seaward. As far as he could see, there stretched an advancing line of white, wind-driven spray. The ship settled lower with a little shudder. She would hardly last until the wind came. Once more he looked down to the main-deck.

Barker had dragged two chairs and a mattress from his room. He was lashing

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them together to form a raft, the life-buoy in the center. Mike, swinging his feet, looked on with absorbing interest. Some fighter, that crook! Broken-legged, doomed, he still could fashion that pathetic, useless cockle-shell. And that flare-cylinder dangling from his waist hampered him cruelly. Poor fool! Did he hope to live long enough to signal with it? Mike's lips drew back over his teeth. Signal . . . .

"——!" whispered Mike Slattery, dropping to the deck.

In three strides he was beside Barker, knife in hand. Bending down, he cut the lashings, tore the raft apart.

"You devil!" Barker spat out, his face contorted with hate. "You devil! You've got your chance. Let me have mine!"

"Why, sure," Mike Slattery laughed exultantly. "Two good fightin' men we are, George Barker—with not a grain's weight to choose between us. You'll come with me in my cab!" As he spoke, he bent and raised the other man in his arms. "Time we was movin'. Look overside!"

A breath of wind stirred his bare hair as, panting, he laid Barker on the raft. He got on himself and passed turn after turn of life-line around them both. Raising Barker, he laid the injured man's head against his shoulder.

Then the hurricane was on them. With a yelling shriek, its force smote the sinking ship. Sheets of spray drenched and blinded them. They sensed, rather than saw that the *Carolina* was gone. The raft was afloat, adrift in a sea whose wind-tortured crests licked hungrily for them, but over which she bobbed as safe as a bit of board on the raging wavelets of a mill-pond.

Bleak and endless hours of black night and gray day passed over them. The dead-weight of Barker's unconscious body had made Mike numb. But ever and anon he laughed, feeling the bank of Barker's flare-cylinder against him. So came the third dawn, with the wind gone and a rosy promise of sun above the heaving waste. He had not provisioned the raft for two and the assuagement of the raging thirst of Barker's delirium had meant his own stern denial.

George Barker stirred. Mike, looking into his face, saw his eyes open.

"Maybe some breakfast wouldn't go bad, George," he whispered with salt-cracked lips and swollen tongue. "The grub's still with us."

Barker, staring toward the south, raised a feeble arm and pointed.

"Look there!" he croaked.

Mike looked. A steamer's range-lights showed. Below them, a cloud of smoke smudged the pearly gray of the dawn sky. Both men watched, hardly daring to breathe. Presently, a green side-light raised from the sea and, less distinct, a red.

"A Red D boat from Venezuela," Mike rasped.

"If she sees us, you and I won't go down together after all, Mike Slattery." He tried to raise himself, but fell back, swearing in futile irritation. "——! If we only had a flare!"

Mike's face, distorted with the torture of his thirst, bent over him. Mike's blood-shot eyes burned into his own. Mike's painful speech sounded mockingly in his ears.

"What's the matter with the flare you got tied to you, George?" He pointed to the ship. "You better be quick. See, she's bearin' away!"

Barker saw and his face twitched, but that was all. Then he found his cylinder and worried at the cap.

"We're both—licked—Mike. Even at—last I tried—beat you. You knew it—still you shared your chance. Swear—I'd have given you—these—if we'd made it."

The cap was off the cylinder. Mike reached in two fingers and drew forth a roll of drawing-paper. He spread the plans and looked at them approvingly.

"A good job, George. And I promised you half of whatever I made. I ain't a double-crosser. You get it!" He separated the sheets into equal parts and handed half to Barker. Slowly, he tore the papers that he held and cast the pieces into the sea.

Barker tried to grab for them and fell back with a moan of anguish.

"You're crazy. It'll take a year to do them over!"

"Might as well tear yours, George."

Mike reached into his stores and found his own signal-flare. A moment later, the glare and smoke of its burning were carrying their message to the distant steamer. Holding the flare aloft, he gripped Barker's shoulder, a smile on his twisted face.

"Another guy beat us to it, George. Rear-Admiral Melville, U. S. N., gets the credit of givin' a turbine reducin'-gear to the world!"

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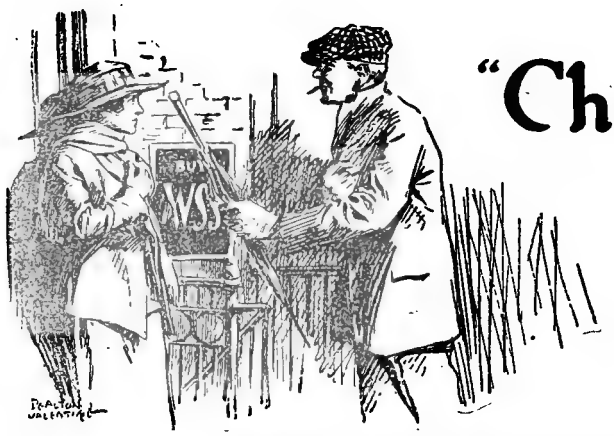

"Chivalry"

by Gordon Young

Author of "Gaboreau the Terrible," "Murder!" etc.

IF YOU had asked "Squint-Eye" Lewis—the same who ran a saloon in Comber Alley—about "Whitey Dick," he would have told you that Whitey was a "square guy what never took a dollar off a goil er left a frien' in de lurch."

If you had asked the police, any of the Central Office detectives would have told you with that offhand, casual positiveness that characterizes police the world over, that Whitey was one of Squint-Eye's gangsters whose sole means of livelihood was through taking other people's property; that once in his career he had been in a set that operated with a moving van on houses closed for the Summer, but this "business" had failed due to the lengthy retirement of several of the partners. "A nervy little crook an' he lays off skirts. Says there ain't a lad behind the bars but some female put him there."

Such is often the conflicting testimony regarding a man's attitude toward women.

Here is an episode out of Whitey Dick's life, and you may judge for yourself.

It was late and raining and Whitey was stepping out of the side door of "Dago Jim's" place in something of a businesslike hurry when he bumped into a girl. Whitey may be said to have been, at that moment, actively engaged in his means of livelihood, though ordinarily he would have scorned such shoplifting tactics as had provided him with the ivory-and-gold-handled umbrella that he carried.

But a few seconds before he had taken it from the side of a silk-shod, dainty-faced lady of the other world whose slumming party was chaperoned by a Central Office Dick who was proudly and continually assuring the white-breasted dudes and rosebud-faced dames that they were as safe under his care in the haunts of gangland as by their own firesides. Having certain vivid remembrances of an official introduction to that particular detective, Whitey made off with the umbrella as a kind of oblique revenge.

And coming out of the side door he bumped into the bedraggled girl, her wet skirts clinging to her legs and her soaked hat dropping over her face. He probably would not have bumped into her except that he had his eyes cast over his shoulders in a parting glance at the detective who was voluably enlarging on the terror in which evil-doers, particularly in this neighborhood, held him. Also, the edges of the girl's wet hat drooped so that she could not see him coming through the doorway.

"Why the —— don't youse look w'ere——"

But Whitey broke off abruptly. He was wise to the way of women, and knew that many considered bumping into a man as good as an introduction—sometimes better than an introduction, for it permitted swift fingers to empty a pocket. But this girl raised the edge of her hat and gasped from fright. She was nothing but a child, sixteen or seventeen.

Whitey had seen many children on the streets, but these girl-children, that slunk into dark corners at the padding footsteps of a harness bull, never gasped from fright

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when any one swore at them. They swore back. Whitey had made a mistake. He could see her lips trembled as she stared at him.

"Par-don muh!" said Whitey, exaggerating each syllable to show something of how much he realized that he had been in the wrong. And in a determined effort to be polite, he thrust the handle of the umbrella at her, saying: "Here, youse take it. I'm just beatin' across the street. Youse need it."

An umbrella would not do her much more good than a sieve for she could not have been more wet.

"No, no," she protested, perhaps not fully understanding his intentions.

"Take it er leave it," he said, opening and dropping it to the sidewalk. "Somebody'll grab it if youse don't."

And raising his coat-collar and pulling his cap lower, Whitey started across the street. He did not have the righteous feeling that such gallantry might be expected to have inspired within him. He was wondering what she was doing out alone where scarcely a woman that walked the street at such an hour did not have her monniker on the police blotter.

Whitey glanced back and saw her still standing by the umbrella; and she was looking after him. He quickly turned his head and went on.

But she was across the street almost as soon as he.

"Might 've knowed it," he remarked cynically to himself, meaning thereby that all women at that time of night around Comber Alley were alike, though some of them might not look it.

"Oh," she said breathlessly, "I—I'm in trouble."

"Muh usual complaint," he answered coldly as his eyes wandered casually up and down the dim street.

"I'm a stranger and I haven't a friend."

"Huh," said Whitey, eying her from tip to toe.

She had a pretty face but she had been crying. Funny, he thought, that a woman with her face couldn't have "friends." Whitey was cynical with the wisdom that is acquired in the byways and shadows.

"I was put out into the street an hour ago without a cent."

She said it simply; not like a panhandler; not like one out to play the sympathy racket.

"Huh?"

There was a new note in it, something that bespoke the possibility of high indignation if her story were true. Whitey did not know whether to put faith in her or not. It would not do any harm to listen—at least until she asked for money and gave her hand away.

She was wet through and through. The water streamed from her clinging skirts and dripped through her shapeless hat and ran down her face as they stood in the entrance way of a pawn-shop.

"Where youse from?" he asked tentatively.

She mentioned some little pumpkinville place down in Kentucky.

"Where 's you goin'?"

It was not so very easy to understand him. His clipped words coming as though from the side of his mouth were strange to her ears. She told him that she had not known where she was going, but a man had spoken to her a block or so away and had started to follow, and that she had been walking fast for fear he would catch her, but that she had hoped to find a policeman.

"No bulls loose on wet nights," he assured her; and she thought that a very strange remark, but said nothing.

So standing there in the entrance of a pawn-shop she started to tell him her story; but before she had got far along with it, he saw how she shivered from the wet and cold and invited her around the corner to a little hash-house with "tables for ladies." She was a little reluctant to go, but she had a tale of wo and had found friendly ears. Besides, where else was there to go?

WITH a cup of steaming coffee, made of chicory and boiled to blackness, in her hand, and untouched fried eggs before her, she told her story. It was an old one. Babylon knew it, and Rome. It is daily in the papers of New York, of Chicago, of any city. The details vary a little from day to day; but as long as the fame of cities is noised throughout the land, firing the young with desire, ambition, hope, the story that Roxanna Blair told to Whitey Dick will be common in the ears of men.

After her father's death she had taken some four hundred dollars, all she had come by through his death, and arrived in New York to be in due course of time a prima donna. She had a voice. The choir-leader at Flemings thought it a wonderful,

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wonderful voice, and advised that she go to New York—as deeply sorry as he was to have her go away. But matters of personal interest should not stand in the way of a career. The choir-leader was her best friend. An old aunt who had not been able to hear for twenty years—and was glad of it, because she did not like to be disturbed while reading tracts—was her only relative.

Oh, yes, Roxanna knew that she would have to study and work hard and all that. She knew her money would not go far. So she planned to get into a good family, do a little housework and use her money for lessons. At the suggestion of that same precious choir-leader she had put an ad. in the paper. She had said in the ad. that she had a little money and that she wanted to study music and to live with nice people. And she gave her name and the address of the cheap little rooming-house where she was stopping until she could get settled.

It is not difficult to imagine what happened. The first thing the very next morning a woman, middle-aged, richly dressed, imposing, arrived even before Roxanna was out of bed, and said that she had seen the ad. because she was always on the lookout for a chance to help lonely girls, particularly girls who were musical.

In less than ten minutes this Mrs. Washburn, by her own account a widow who had lost her only daughter, had her arms around Roxanna's neck and was calling her daughter; and also in that same ten minutes she knew that Roxanna had exactly three hundred and forty-seven dollars and fifty-four cents, was from Flemings, Kentucky, did not have a friend nearer than that, and had nobody in the world to depend on except a deaf, doddering old aunt. Of course, she also knew about the choir-leader and what he had said about Roxanna's voice, and that he was a school-teacher and had once proposed to her; but Roxanna thought him dreadfully old at thirty-one, and besides she had her career.

Mrs. Washburn had not expected to find Roxanna a girl who would appeal to her so much; and nothing would do but that she get her suitcase and come right away home to live with her.

Roxanna had never been in what she thought was so perfectly gorgeous a home. It was a rather large house too, and had so much bright furniture and much red trappings that Roxanna thought surely she had fallen into a palace to live, though there was only one servant, a negro maid, and Mrs. Washburn had no company except a man, her business adviser she called him, who came sometimes and stayed late. He had spells of heart trouble—Mrs. Washburn said when Roxanna had once seen him staggering in the hall.

Mrs. Washburn told Roxanna that now as she had a good home, and didn't need any money anyway—because she, Mrs. Washburn, was going to pay for the lessons just as soon as she could decide on the best vocal instructor—that the money had better be given to her for safe-keeping. She would put it in the bank, and of course Roxanna could have it any time. The girl readily gave it to her.

Then Mrs. Washburn lost a "priceless" ring.

She accused the girl of being the thief, and said that she had to give up that ring right away or the police would be called.

Roxanna was terrified. The idea of the police frightened her into a panic, though she was innocent and protested and cried and implored Mrs. Washburn to believe her. But it did no good. Mrs. Washburn must have her ring.

Mrs. Washburn held a conversation over the telephone with some one who she said was the police and who was coming right out to get Roxanna.

The girl pleaded not to have her arrested, and Mrs. Washburn said:

"Well, get out of my house. Get out! I was like a mother to you and you treat me like this!"

But Roxanna did not want to go. She feared the police, but she was innocent. Besides, the great city terrified her.

And when Mrs. Washburn saw that the girl was not going to run away, she became furious. She slapped her, and pulled her to the door. Roxanna mentioned the three hundred and forty-seven dollars and fifty-four cents.

"Get out!" said the wrathful woman. "No, I won't give you a cent. You're young and good-looking. Besides, you have my ring. Go back to your old graft, you thief!"

She was half-pushed and half-frightened out of the house. The door closed behind her. And there she was in the rain, without a thing excepting the clothes on her back.

And as she sat at the greasy oilclothed

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table in the dirty little hash-house, she protested earnestly to Whitey Dick that she had never touched that ring; that the negro maid must have taken it; that she was extremely sorry and distressed that Mrs. Washburn, who had been so good to her, should believe she was a thief.

Whitey Dick inhaled deeply from a cigaret and looked hard at the girl from under the low-drawn visor of his cap.

"Say, kid, youse is one grand sucker," he muttered not wholly unsympathetically, but in an absent sort of a way as though his mind was on other things. "Wait a mo'," he added and, getting up from the table, went to a telephone and called a number with which he was too familiar to need to consult a book.

"Dis is Whitey. Say, Squint-Eye, I got a square goil on muh mits. Yuh, from de country. Kintucky—where'ver dat is. String me? Say, Squint-Eye, dis kid c'd fall in a bucket o' green paint an' never show it. I don't know whata do wit' er!" Whitey's voice rose in accents of helplessness.

But the reply was what Whitey had expected it would be. He was told to take the girl around to Mrs. Squint-Eye Lewis. Squint-Eye said that he would telephone and that she would be waiting for them.

Mrs. Squint-Eye—whose eyes were not squinted in the least—was waiting with open arms. She took that poor, wet, shivering girl into them welcomingly.

"Say," Whitey whispered to Mrs. Lewis as she was busy with hot water and brandy. "She'll spill 'er story to youse, but don't put 'er wise to that Washburn dame. It hoits t' be misjudged; but it hoits longer to know youse been a mutt. I knows, b'lieve muh. I've caught it both ways."

Whitey went down to Comber Alley and had a talk with Squint-Eye, who told him not to be a fool. But Whitey was stubborn. He called it "his funeral," said the "Washburn skirt" had it coming and he was going to see that she got it. Whitey Dick's blood was up, and though he was not considered a particularly dangerous man, Squint-Eye knew him for a resourceful fellow who was willing to take a certain amount of risks. So finally Squint-Eye agreed to have some inquiries made regarding Mrs. Washburn of 34 Dearing Place.

The next day or two a friend of Squint-Eye's did a little sleuthing on Whitey's behalf and reported that Mrs. Washburn had lived at that address for some time, and had kept the sort of a house that is not supposed to exist; but that a few weeks before she had got into trouble with the Federal authorities. Though the police, for reasons best known to themselves, were willing enough to let her alone, she was temporarily obliged to be "respectable." The Mann Act had something to do with it, but details were lacking.

Anyway, while being respectable, Mrs. Washburn had been compelled to resort to those little grafts that were tolerated by the police and outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice.

"Wahtchu goin' 'o pull, Whitey?" Squint-Eye asked.

"Depends," said Whitey enigmatically.

IT WAS in the early forenoon that Whitey called at Mrs. Washburn's.

A young negress in white cap and apron opened the door cautiously. She scrutinized him and asked what he wanted.

"I comes ter explain that ter de loidy herself," Whitey replied pugnaciously, as though he and the "loidy" had some affairs in common and it was not necessary to confide to a maid.

"Madame Washburn isn't in."

"Naw? Youse take dis to 'er, an' see. I comes from him."

Thereupon Whitey presented the personal card of a notorious young rounder who, a few nights before while a bit unsteady on his legs and somewhat thick of tongue, had insisted upon assuring Whitey Dick that he was a prince of good fellows as well as a man of some importance. But he was only the son of a man of some importance. Whitey Dick thought that if it came to a pinch the young rounder could prove an alibi better than he.

The maid let Whitey in. He looked like one of the gentry with whom madame had often done business, and she went with the card to find her.

Whitey looked about him. The house was rather well-furnished on the flashy plan, with everything chosen for effect. There was a piano, a Victrola too, a number of solid chairs, a large leather divan, curtains, some paintings in oil, and a few good rugs.

Madame Washburn came in. She was not bad-looking for a woman well along in

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middle-age—if one cared for only external effects. Her face was hard, and her thin lips and narrow, calculating eyes let Whitey know that he was up against a cold, hard dame.

In a businesslike though slightly suspicious manner she tapped the card and asked Whitey what he wanted.

He went straight to the point.

"Dig down, old goil, an' shell out de coin dat b'longs to Miss Blair."

Her eyes narrowed—she almost closed them. She stiffened her shoulders perceptibly, and she cut loose on Whitey: told him that his dirty little graft would not go with her, that the girl was a thief, and that if he did not get out of her house at once she would call the police. The last was highly probable. She seemed to have a rather valuable friendship with the police.

Whitey pulled a revolver: thrust it up under her nose.

He had no way of knowing that she was merely the one woman in ten thousand that would not gasp in fright and hurriedly dig down into her stocking and advance the money for fear that if she hesitated the coroner would be knocking at the door to find the caliber of the bullet that hit her.

"A little melodrama, eh?" she said sneeringly, then laughed.

The laugh was rather forced, but it was a contemptuous, scornful laugh. She seemed to know that a man, even of Whitey's type, would hesitate to shoot.

But she added quickly, and convincingly, that she did not have any money in the house; and that if he did shoot he would have nothing for his pains but the cops at his heels.

Whitey swore and flushed. It was humiliating to be beaten by a woman. And she knew it. She rubbed salt into his sores. She did not for a minute deny that she knew a Miss Blair, and said that Whitey was only peeved because he had not got the money off the girl in the first place, intimating that she could earn plenty more for him.

Whitey was getting hotter and hotter inside. He furtively glanced about to see that the negro maid was not in sight—then Mrs. Washburn's mouth was suddenly closed, and an arm went around her throat, bearing her backward across Whitey's knee until her head was against his chest, and she couldn't have made a squeak loud enough to have been heard across the room if her life had depended on it. He was not gentle, but perhaps she was not unconscious more than a minute or two; but when she came back to life, she was gagged and trussed.

Then Whitey went after the maid. She put up a harder fight than the madame. Her legs weren't swathed in as much drapery, and she used them vigorously. But she might as well have taken it quietly. Whitey saw the danger of being bitten on the hand unless the forearm about her throat was tightened, and he tightened it. She too was gagged and tied.

Whitey went through the house and found no signs of any one else—or of cash.

There were eight or ten rooms and a second story, but most of the trappings were down-stairs where they would make an impression.

He found the madame's jewels—paste. Perhaps her real ones were in a safety-deposit box. Her bank-account showed three hundred and forty-seven listed as one deposit of recent date. It was not a fat account, but something over two thousand. But he had no intention of taking chances with a check.

Whitey got the women up-stairs by untying their legs and making them walk. Madame had decided that after all it was no laughing matter. He put them into separate rooms, and again made sure that they were fastened securely.

Then he went down-stairs and put in some time apparently wrecking the first floor—not wrecking it exactly, but making it look as if a cyclone had struck it, or that somebody was just moving in or out. But nothing was damaged. It was merely put into disorder.

Whitey consulted a telephone book and found a man who promised to come over right away and take a look around. Whitey, with his coat and collar off and his sleeves rolled up, and appearing very much at home, met him at the door. The man looked around, dickered a while, and sent for a van.

"Ever't'ing on dis floor goes. See?"

Piano, Victrola, desk, divan, rugs, curtains, pictures—all went into a capacious van. It was what is sometimes called wholesale robbery.

Whitey, wise in the disposal of furniture, had got an innocent dealer who specialized in auctions. He bought furniture on speculation and carried it to an auction room.

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Whitey knew that in this way the furniture would be scattered all over the city, and that the police friends of Mrs. Washburn would have some difficulty in locating it. The man who bought the furniture had often done business with houses—forced to close—such as Mrs. Washburn had kept, and was accustomed to seeing such men as Whitey about.

Whitey counted the money: three hundred and fifty dollars. The man had offered two hundred dollars and Whitey had asked for five hundred dollars. The usual compromise followed in due time. Then the van departed; and Whitey, also, carrying with him a suitcase marked with the initials "R. B."

That afternoon Roxanna left for Flemings, Kentucky; and Whitey and Mrs. Squint-Eye Lewis went to the train with her. She and Mrs. Lewis had had a long woman-to-woman, and heart-to-heart talk, and Roxanna had decided that she did not want a career on the operatic stage, and that the choir-leader wasn't so very much older than she after all.

Whitey told Roxanna that Mrs. Washburn was awfully sorry for the mistake she had made, and that the "priceless" ring hadn't been stolen at all; but Mrs. Lewis was frankly incredulous. But she had to wait for her husband to tell her the story: Whitey Dick would never confide in a woman.

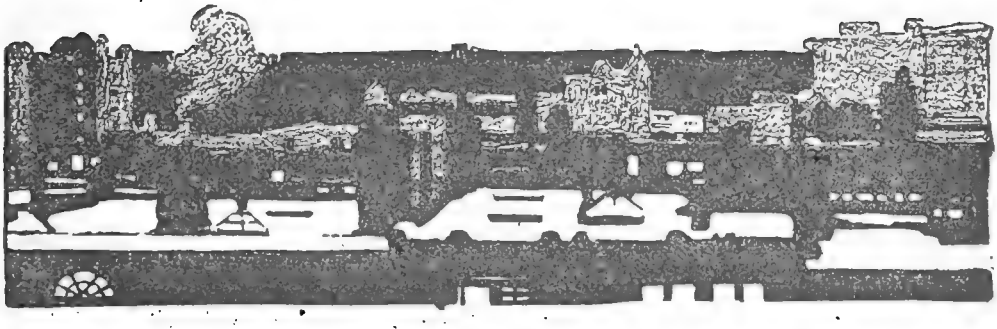
After the train had gone, Whitey telephoned from a public booth to tell the police that they might find something to interest them at a certain address which he mentioned; and in that way he secured the release of his prisoners.

Mrs. Washburn made a big fuss, and gave a very good description of Whitey. But it was a description that would have fitted a thousand that slipped along the streets of the underworld. No trace of the furniture was found; and Whitey did not even take the trouble to go into hiding.

A few days later a letter arrived for Whitey Dick, sent in the care of Mrs. Lewis, from one John Burleton, Flemings, Kentucy, thanking his very much for the service that he had been to his wife. He wrote in high, stilted phrases to express deep and eternal gratitude, and the wish that he might some day return the favor.

IT WAS about a year later when another letter came. In the stress of more recent excitement and certain disturbing relations with the police, Whitey had forgotten all about Roxanna; so for some seconds he was rather perplexed to read that a son, who had just arrived, at Flemings, Kentucky, had been named Whitey Dick Burleton in grateful remembrance of timely assistance and good offices.

"Say, Squint-Eye," Whitey asked, after a laborious but proud rereading of the letter, "where's Kintucky? T'ink maybe I'll be taking a trip down dere sometime an' pipe me namesake. Some kid, I bet!"



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Witch-Doctors

A Four-Part Story

Part 1

by

Charles Beadle

Author of "The Winged Avenger," "The Black Lure," etc.

ON A bayou in the southeastern corner of the Victoria Nyanza is the station of Ingonya, a brown scab on the face of the green earth. The round mud huts of the *askaris* look like two columns of khaki troops marching rigidly on each side of the parade-ground.

To the north, perched upon a slight rise of ground, are the white men's quarters; the non-commissioned officers have four bungalows to the south of the orderly room and court-house, and beyond a green plot, flanked by a storehouse and an ordnance building, is a bigger bungalow, florid in the amplitude of the red-pillared veranda, on the northern side of which, overlooking a swamp and the distant lake, is a flagpole and an ebon sentry in a uniform of white knickers, tunic, and red-faced lancer cap. This bungalow is the residence of the commandant, Herr Ober-Leutnant Hermann von Schnitzler und zu Pfeiffer.

As the glow of sunrise stained the green of the moon with crimson, a trumpet blared. From the rear of the residence marched with stiff-legged precision a squad of *askaris* and the stocky figure of a non-commissioned officer in a white helmet, as simultaneously on the veranda of the large bungalow appeared the tall form of a white man in pink silk pajamas.

The sergeant barked. As the squad stood rigidly presenting arms, a colored ball ran up the flagpole. The first rays of the sun splintered the bloodied waters beyond into silver spikes and kissed a fluttering black, white, and red flag.

Then the squad ported arms, relieved the sentry, and retired, their black legs gleaming blue points as they rose and fell. The pink figure on the veranda disappeared. Sergeant Schultz strutted back to his bungalow, lighted a cigar, and *sjambok* in hand, returned to the orderly room. Another trumpet blared. From beyond the *askaris'* camp came a line of natives, young and old, their scrawny necks linked together by a light iron chain which clanked musically as they filed into the great parade-ground, where they were divided into gangs by Sergeant Schneider to labor under guard at the interminable work of the camp.

As the air above the swamp began to sizzle in the heat the tall slender figure in immaculate white reappeared upon the south veranda. As the Herr Ober-Leutnant stood staring 'round the small square with a peevish glint in the fair eyes, a big negro in spotless white hurried 'round the house bearing a brass tray set with a cup, a liqueur glass and a bottle. Herr Leutnant sprawled his legs on either arm of the Bombay chair. As he delicately mixed cognac with his coffee, his jeweled fingers sparkled in a shaft of sunlight which set afire the sapphires upon an ivory bracelet.

At a yard from the table stood the servant, as rigid as the flagpole. With a lazy insolence which marked his movements, the lieutenant sipped the café cognac and smoked a cheroot as if he were seated on the *terrasse* of the Café de la Paix. The brutality of the round skull, emphasized by the cropped blond hair, seemed at variance with the boyish rotundity of the face and the small but dominant nose. Two separate

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mustaches bristled so fiercely that they suggested sentries on guard over the feminine softness of the lips.

When he had finished, zu Pfeiffer arose languidly, lighted a fresh cigar, adjusted his helmet with care, and took his gold-mounted *sjambok* from the servant. As he strode across the square the lines of his torso were so perfect that they suggested artificial aid.

The orderly room was square and white-washed; grass matting was upon the floor and high screened doors opened on to the north veranda. Zu Pfeiffer sprawled in a swing chair before the office desk set at an oblique angle to the wall and encumbered with books and papers.

After tapping reflectively on a book cover with a polished nail zu Pfeiffer's hand sharply struck the bell. Instantly a corporal appeared at the farther door and stood as if petrified, black hand to black temple. Zu Pfeiffer snapped instructions in Kiswahili without removing his cigar. The man grunted, shot his hand away at right angles with as much energy as if he were trying to knock down an elephant, and vanished.

"Sergeant!"

"*Ja*, Excellence!"

At the other door, like another jack-in-the-box, appeared Sergeant Schultz in exactly the same attitude. At a nod the sergeant melted into the semblance of human movement: he drew aside a chair, selected a certain document from a pile of them and handed it to the lieutenant. Zu Pfeiffer pushed a box of cigars across the table, lolled back in the chair with one foot on the table, and began to peruse lazily: The sergeant retired respectfully with the cigar to the outer office. A fly buzzed disappointedly at the mosquito-wire. The tap of a typewriter sounded like some other strange insect. On the hot air came the faint barks of a drill-sergeant on the parade-ground. From behind the building rose fitfully the murmur of voices from a herd of natives squatted in the sun awaiting the opening of the court-house. Leaves rustled largely under the lieutenant's fingers.

AT LENGTH he pitched the report on to the table, carefully placed the butt of his cigar in an ash-tray, lighted another, and disposed of the match with equal care.

"Sergeant!"

"*Ja*, Excellence!"

Zu Pfeiffer indicated a chair by a thrust of the chin. The sergeant sat. Tapping the report with the highly polished and very long finger-nail of the left hand, the lieutenant demanded—

"Who is the man who gave you this report?"

"Ali ben Hassan, an Arab trader, Excellence."

"Trustworthy?"

"*Ja*, Excellence. He has done much work for us."

"Where?"

"On the Tanganyika district, sub-division B 11, Excellence. He brought papers of first-class recommendation from the *Kommandantur*."

"Ugmh. Ben Hassan speaks of one Sakamata, *nicht wahr?*"

"*Ja*, Excellence."

"Of what tribe is he?"

"Wongolo."

"A witch-doctor?"

"*Ja*, Excellence."

"He is here? Let him come in."

The sergeant rose, saluted and departed. Sharp gutturals sounded lazily. The sergeant reappeared. Behind him shuffled a native. Clad only in a dirty loin-cloth, his brown skin was wrinkled in scaly folds upon his chest and belly; his face was like an ancient tortoise; the small lack-luster eyes were bloodshot and furtive; the limbs were almost fleshless.

He squatted upon the ground, and with lowered lids appeared to be absorbed in contemplation of a white man's table-leg. Zu Pfeiffer regarded the man as one would a stray dog. The sergeant sat down and at a nod resumed his cigar.

"Does he speak Kiswahili?"

"*Nein*, Excellence. Only his monkey speech."

"Why do you suppose that he is trustworthy?"

"Because, Excellence, his interests are with ours. There is no competition. The *schweinhünde Engländer* have no interest there—yet. They are too busy with the Uganda railroad."

"*Ja, ja.* Again, what is the tribal system there; king-god or—" the lieutenant permitted a slight smile—"or dis-established church?"

"King-god, Excellence," replied Sergeant Schultz gravely.

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"This fellow then is an apostate priest, *nicht wahr?*"

The sergeant noticed the movement of one of the sentry mustaches and permitted a slight smile in recognition of his superior's pleasantry.

"*Ja*, Excellence."

Zu Pfeiffer stuck the cigar into the corner of his mouth and stroked one mustache as he regarded idly the dumb figure on the floor against the wall.

"We must have the Wongolo country. *C'est entendu*. Now what's your opinion of the method, Sergeant?"

"With due deference, Excellence," responded Sergeant Schultz, "I propose that we advance and bring them to subjection in the usual manner."

Zu Pfeiffer fingered a ring and stared out into the yellow glare.

"*Nein*," he said at length meditatively, removed the cigar from his lips and delicately knocked off the ash. "Circumstances alter cases. That method is too expensive. *Son Altesse* can not afford the blood of the Fatherland in return for such ignoble carcasses. We—— The price paid in the Herrero campaign was insupportable."

"Pardon, Excellence, but Treitschke, he said——"

"I know, Sergeant. But Treitschke did not live in Central Africa."

"True, Excellence."

"*Die Schweinhünde Engländer* have had more experience than we have. Even a fool learns widsom by experience—sometimes."

"True, Excellence."

Again fell a silence save for the buzz of the persistent fly.

"Also psychological research is more valuable than artillery—sometimes—in spite of Napoleon and Treitschke." Zu Pfeiffer glanced at the sergeant, who beneath the frame of his features appeared shocked. "Blasphemy, *nicht wahr*, Sergeant?"

"If your Excellence thinks——"

"But remember if Napoleon invented the science of artillery we invented psychology."

"True, Excellence."

ZU PFEIFFER smiled complacently and stroked his mustache.

"Now for this animal here. Who and what was he?"

"One of the principal witch-doctors, Excellence, wealthy and powerful. He attempted to overthrow the chief witch-doctor, one Bakahenzie, and was discredited."

"How discredited?"

"He attempted some form of magic, Excellence, which failed. Details are not given."

"Who made the dossier?"

"Ali ben Hassan, Excellence."

"From whom did he get his information?"

"Name given as one Yabolo, another witch-doctor and relative."

"This Saka—Saka—" Zu Pfeiffer glanced at the document—"Sakamata. Is he in communication with this Yabolo?"

"*Ja*, Excellence."

Zu Pfeiffer smoked reflectively.

"When did the last agent come in?"

"But yesterday, Excellence."

"And no report of any other white men in the country? No British missionaries or traders?

"*Nein*, Excellence."

"Where is Saunders?"

"On Lake Kivu."

"No report?"

"Not since the last three months ago, Excellence."

"Umph. Now pay attention." Schultz leaned forward dutifully. Zu Pfeiffer unrolled a map on the wall beside him. "Here's Ingonya. The Wongolo country is twenty days march from here, but across the lake it's twenty hours with the launch, and five days from here—" the delicate finger-nail indicated a spot on the opposite side of the lake—"from here—what's the place? *Ach*, Timballa. To —— with the British boundary! We must not give them time to get the news. They will be too occupied to look after us. Always rush the seat of Government. Surprize them and they're done."

"But, Excellence, Treitschke says regarding retreat——"

"There will be no retreat. At Mfunya Mpopo's is the idol, the fetish. We destroy it and they're done!" He brought down his fist with a crash on the table. "Faith unites a people; in unity is strength. Break the faith and you've broken the people."

"But, Excellence!" exclaimed the Lutheran sergeant aghast.

Zu Pfeiffer's blue eyes hardened.

"Understand, you fool, these are savages.

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You have an abstract deity—which you can not break in the concrete—obviously: they have a concrete god which we can and shall smash."

"Excellence, you are right," said the sergeant humbly.

Zu Pfeiffer flicked cigar ash from his sleeve and lolled back.

"Those are your orders. Commandeer the necessary canoes and notify Ludwig to have the men in readiness for the full moon. Work out the details and give them to me tomorrow."

"*Ja*, Excellence," Schultz stubbed his cigar and rose to attention. "But Excellence, this creature——"

Zu Pfeiffer glanced casually at Sakamata. "Oh, that! Take it away."

Schultz saluted smartly and wheeled about.

"*Njoo!*" he commanded sharply.

Sakamata rose up quietly and disappeared through the door without glancing to the right or the left.

"The court awaits your Excellence," reminded the sergeant.

As Zu Pfeiffer nodded languidly, a booted foot clopped on the veranda.

"*Wer da?*" queried Sergeant Schultz, startled at the intrusion of a stranger.

"Oh, it's only I," responded a soft voice in English.

Through the screen door a tall figure in a Tirai hat was silhouetted in sepia against the yellow glare. A brown hand pushed open the door.

"*Mon nom est* Birnier, Gerald Birnier. Er—does any one speak English?"

Zu Pfeiffer in the act of rising sank back into the chair, placing his left leg in its favorite position and selecting a cigar simultaneously.

"Yes," said he, almost without accent. "What do you want?"

"I wish to see the—the *Herr Kommandant.*"

Zu Pfeiffer struck a match without looking up.

"I am he. Well?"

One hand upon the open door, Birnier stroked his shaven chin perplexedly with the other. He glanced from the sergeant, standing rigidly by the table, to the lieutenant, engaged in stoking his cigar to a nicety.

"Well, it's usual to invite a white man to sit down, isn't it?" suggested Birnier with a note of irritation.

Zu Pfeiffer looked across the table.

"*Nein.* This is the orderly room; not a general office."

"Oh, I see. I beg your pardon!" There was a note of laughter in the voice. "Will you kindly instruct me where I am to apply?"

Zu Pfeiffer continued to regard the stranger from head to foot, smoking slowly.

"Please to come in," he said at length, gesturing with his cigar, "and sit down."

"Thanks so much!"

THE hint of irony seemed to escape Zu Pfeiffer as he gave a guttural order to the sergeant, who saluted and disappeared. The stranger placed his Tirai hat on the table, revealing rumpled brown hair flecked with gray, a high, white forehead and long features; the slight stoop of the shoulders and general carriage suggested rather a professional type than a hunter or trader. He regarded the slim figure staring insolently at him with a hardening look of disapproval.

"What is it you wish?"

"Well, principally I require an elephant license and the usual permit to trade."

"Where are you going?"

"To the Kivu country."

Zu Pfeiffer regarded his cigar tip interestedly.

"You are going to the Wongolo country," he stated.

Birnier's mouth tightened.

"Quite possibly."

"You have been to the Wongolo country already?"

"Yes, I have been there, but what has that to do with it?"

"We know all about you," stated zu Pfeiffer coldly, twiddling his cigar between slender fingers. He glanced at a gold repeater. "Pardon, but I must request you to return later. The court is already awaiting me." Birnier frowned slightly. "If you will be so good as to return at let us say five o'clock, I will be pleased to listen to your application."

Birnier rose, taking his hat.

"Certainly," he said curtly. "Good morning!"

Zu Pfeiffer watched him depart; then he struck the bell sharply. Sergeant Shultz appeared, a line of nervous expectancy upon his sallow face.

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"Why have you not reported that man's arrival?" demanded zu Pfeiffer harshly.

"Excellence," returned Schultz saluting, "he has but arrived within the hour in a launch, loaned to him by the *Engländer*."

"*Ach*, an English spy?"

"I do not know, Excellence."

"We ought to know. Why have you not made a report of the man's movements? He admits that he has been in the Wongolo country!"

"Excellence, it is already done." Schultz hurriedly searched a card-index cabinet and handed a document to the lieutenant. "There is Saunders' report, Excellence; more than six months old."

Zu Pfeiffer glanced at the page indicated and began to read while the sergeant stood stiffly to attention.

"You may go, Sergeant," announced zu Pfeiffer without looking up.

Schultz saluted and departed. Pfeiffer finished the report leisurely, put down the paper, and stared meditatively.

"No," he decided as he rose, "all the English are spies."

II

LIKE a topaz set in a jade ring was the City of the Snake, the Place of Kings, a village of some eight hundred huts, huddled upon a slight rise above a sea of banana fronds, in the morning sun, some two hundred miles to the west of Ingonya.

On the summit was a large conical hut. Like an enormous candle-snuffer, the dwelling-place of Usakuma, the spirit of the Snake, whose name was forbidden to all save the priest-god and rain-maker, King Mfunya Mpopo, who was so holy that after succeeding to the sacred office he was doomed to live within the enclosing compound even as were kings of Utopia, Sheba, and China, a celibate for the remainder of his life. For as the incarnation of the idol, Usakuma, and therefore the controller of the heavens and the earth, his body must be kept from all danger from witchcraft lest the rains cease and the blue skies fall.

From the compound, looking toward the northwest, where the snow-capped Camballagalla rose violet against the horizon, another brown cone peeped above the green fronds, the late residence and now the tomb of King Mkoffo, predecessor of Mfunya Mpopo. For where a king-god dies, there is he buried, he and his wives after him. The site becomes holy ground, a place of pilgrimage and sanctuary.

In each of the small huts to the rear of the temple of Mfunya Mpopo, but outside the sacred enclosure, lived his wives, who, although forbidden to their husband, were permitted a royal promiscuity. Just within the precincts of the enclosure was a small replica of the temple where dwelt a young chief, also bound to celibacy, whose duty it was to keep the royal fire burning as long as the king should reign.

No one was allowed to converse with the king, save on matters of state, except this man; through him was spoken the royal will —what there was left of it—to the council which sat in a long, rectangular building opposite to the temple entrance and open to the village, a body of witch-doctors and chiefs.

Solely the kingly office existed as a matter of self-preservation on the part of the tribe; as a beneficent agent to preserve the continuance of the tribe in peace and war. The king-god's real functions were divine—to make magic for the victory of his warriors and principally to make rain on which, of course, the alimentary needs of his subjects depended; an incarnation of a god was he, and in reality the scapegoat of the god's omissions.

The office was hereditary. Perhaps no one else would willingly accept such an onerous post. The making of magic was performed before the god with the assistance of the chief witch-doctor, an exceedingly lucrative post won upon merit, occupied by one Bakahenzie, a tall, muscular man in the prime of life, whose bearing was that of the native autocrat, fierce and remorseless.

The king's personal wishes could be safely granted—so long as he did not endanger the existence of the people by a desire to break any of the meshes of the tabus which were designed to ensure the safety of his sacred body and therefore that of the tribe, on the assumption that if the incarnation were injured the god would be injured and therefore his creations would be equally affected; any infringement of these laws entailed the penalty of death. A code which revealed the native logic in the confusion of cause and effect, the concrete and the abstract.

In the door of a hut on the outskirts of the village squatted a wizened man with a tuft

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of gray beard upon his chin. He was clad in a loin-cloth fairly clean, and about his neck was suspended by a twisted fiber an amulet wrapped in banana leaves containing the gall and toe-nail of an enemy slain by a virgin warrior, a specific against black magic whose powerful properties were proved by the undisputed influence and wealth of the owner.

A tall, lithe savage, bearing upon his arms and ankles the ivory bracelets of the royal house and the elephant-hair chaplet of the warrior, advanced leisurely toward him from the banana plantation. Marufa continued to gaze in ruminating contemplation at the opposite hut.

But as they had not met since the rising of the sun he did not fail to make the orthodox greeting at the exact moment that the chief's shadow passed in front of him, which Zalu Zako returned punctiliously, thereby averting an evil omen.

As soon as the young man had passed appeared in the grove a girl, young and modeled like a bronze wood nymph. She wore the tiny girdle of the unmarried and walked furtively, carrying in her hand a parcel wrapped in banana leaves. In the shadow of a hut she halted, one slender brown arm set back in apprehension as her eyes followed the lithe figure of Zalu Zako.

MOTIONLESS sat Marufa staring in mystic contemplation. Bakuma glanced swiftly about her. Apparently satisfied that no one was observing her save a lean dog and two gollywog children, she continued on as if to pass the old man, her eyes still ranging like a fawn's. But when she was beside Marufa she subsided on her haunches beside him, clutching the bundle as she whispered—

"Greetings, O wise one!"

"Greeting, daughter," returned Marufa, without lessening the fixity of his gaze.

"I would talk with thee."

"Aye."

Again she glanced around furtively.

"I would talk in thine ear, O my father."

"The knots of my hair are tied."

"I thank thee. There is a fluttering bird within my breast."

"And a snake around thy heart, O my daughter."

"*Ehh!*"

"Zalu Zako, the grandson of the Snake, hath tied thy girdle."

"*Ehh!*"

The girl clasped her breast in surprized terror.

"How dost thou know?"

"All things are known to the son of M'Tungo," declared Marufa solemnly, still regarding the opposite wall. "Thou desirest a love-charm. What hast thou?"

Tremulously Bakuma put down the green package on the ground, darting terrified glances to right and left. Slowly the skinny hand of the wizard gently tore open the leaves; very impressively the eyes slanted down to appraise the stock of blue and white beads.

"The spirit of Tarum hath a big belly," he announced tonelessly.

"O wise one, intercede for me," pleaded Bakuma, "for more have I none; I, Bakuma, daughter of Bakala, a girl of the hut thatch."

"The true love-charm, infallible and powerful, is difficult to obtain. O Bakuma, the young huntress aims at big game."

"*Ehh!* But I have no more, great one!"

"The hair of a rutting leopard, the liver of a forest rat, the tongue of a Baroto bird—these must I have to mix with thy blood to be drunk by thy man when the moon is full."

"*Ehh! Ehh!*"

"Such is the magic that no young man can resist."

"*Ehh-h!*"

"But these things are difficult to obtain."

"*Aiel Aiel*" wailed Bakuma, clasping her hands in despair.

"Difficult to obtain."

"*Aie-e!*"

"On the night of the half-moon will I take upon me the leopard form."

"*Ehh!*"

"I will talk with the spirits."

"*Ehh! Ehh!*"

"But they must be propitiated with the blood of a fat goat."

"*Aiel Aiel* But I have no fat goat."

"If there be no fat goat then will the spirits be wroth with me."

"*Aie-e-e!*"

Bakuma sat staring in dismal perplexity.

"No fat goat have I, a girl of the hut thatch! *Aiel Aiel*"

Marufa fumbled within the loin-cloth and thrust a tiny package along the ground.

"See and know the power of my magic."

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Bakuma greedily snatched up the amulet.

"Begone!" he whispered, jerking the parcel of beads behind him. "M'Yalu approaches."

"*Ehl*"

Bakuma rose and fled with the grace of a startled antelope, as appeared a tall, strongly built man having a low-browed face, across which was a deep scar. Behind M'Yalu came two young slaves bearing a small elephant tusk. Opposite to Marufa the slaves stopped. Their master, careful that his shadow fell well away from the figure of the magician—for the shadow is one of the souls and wo unto him who leaves his soul in the hands of an enemy—squatted gravely.

"Greeting, son of M'Tungo!"

"Greeting, son of M'Busa!" returned Marufa.

Gravely they spat into each other's palm, the sign of amity and the bond of good behavior inasmuch, as is well known, magic can be worked upon that which has been a part of the body as upon the body itself. Then solemnly they rubbed the spittle upon their respective chests.

"The spirit of the Snake nourisheth not the life of the banana."

"Nay, for nigh unto two moons hath there been no blood of the Snake," returned the old man perfunctorily as he lifted his eyes from a swift appraisal of the tusk to his favorite mud wall.

"Nay, the crops sprout not. Maybe the dweller in the place of the Snake hath been visited by one from the forest."

"Aye, but old blood runs not as swiftly as young blood."

"Nay," replied M'Yalu, in answer to the reference to himself, "but the girdle is not yet tied by another."

"When the first twig of the nest is laid," remarked Marufa, indolently eyeing the tusk, "it is difficult to entice the hen to another tree."

"Here is a goodly twig with which to tempt spirits of the forest." And significantly, "Maybe there are others."

"A mighty potion shall be prepared for thee, O son of M'Busa," declared Marufa moving slightly to conceal the package of beads. "A mighty potion, infallible; made from the hair of a rutting leopardess, the liver of the forest rat and the tongue of the Baroto bird; these must she take that she shall speak thee softly, together with a potion of that which remains from the ceremony of the *lobolo*. Infallible is it; never known to fail."

"*Ehh!*"

MARUFA stared interestedly at a wandering hen. M'Yalu watched him covertly. Like bronzes sat the two young slaves. From the distance came a faint chanting and the beat of a drum.

"The tusk is here, O Marufa," remarked M'Yalu casually.

"My eyes see it," observed Marufa, without altering his observation of the hen.

"Where, then, is the potion?"

Marufa glanced at the tusk, appraised it again, and fumbling within his loin-cloth, thrust another tiny package along the ground. M'Yalu greedily picked up the amulet and stared in awe, turning it over and about.

"The tusk," murmured Marufa.

M'Yalu gestured to his slaves. They rose and placed the tusk beside the old man, shuffled backward and squatted again. After lifting one end to test the weight Marufa examined the grain. Then, sliding it behind him as if he wished to sit upon it, he remarked,

"The potion must be eaten at the full moon."

"*Ehh!*"

M'Yalu glanced up from an absorbed examination of the amulet.

"And within the quarter shall the fruit be ripe for the plucking." The whites of M'Yalu's eyes gleamed. "Unless," continued the old man uninterestedly, "there be stronger magic made against thee."

"*Ehh!*"

The two hands holding the amulet came down.

"If," explained Marufa, "another hath tied the grasses of her father's roof, will there be required a stronger spirit to overcome such magic."

"But thou hast told me," expostulated M'Yalu, eyeing the tusk regretfully, "that this is a mighty magic, powerful and infallible, never known to fail."

"Thus is it," asserted the old man imperturbably, "for all save a stronger magic."

M'Yalu's eyes wandered from the tusk to Marufa and back. He scowled.

"Why didst thou not tell me?" he demanded sourly, dropping the amulet on the ground.

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"It is for thee to tell the wizard all that thou knowest. How else may he reckon with thine enemies?"

"Enemy!" exclaimed M'Yalu. He stared questioningly at Marufa. "Enemy! Dost thou know whom I seek?"

"Do not all the hens remark the strutting of the cock?" inquired Marufa unconcernedly, tapping his snuff-box. "Bakuma, the daughter of Bakala."

"*Ehh!*"

M'Yalu observed the taking of snuff as if he had never seen the operation before.

"*Ehh!*" he remarked again succinctly.

Marufa replaced the cork of twisted leaves, let fall the snuff-box, made of rhinoceros horn and suspended from his neck by a copper wire, and contemplated a skinny goat scratching itself violently. M'Yalu stirred as if to rise, but subsided, cogitated, and said slowly—

"In the house of M'Yalu are four more tusks."

"Four more tusks," repeated Marufa dreamily.

"Bigger than this one," said M'Yalu suggestively.

"Bigger than this one."

"Knowest thou by whom the girdle is tied?"

"By the grandson of the Snake, Zalu Zako."

"*Ehh!*"

M'Yalu squatted motionless. The old man appeared to doze. Women bearing gourds of water upon their heads passed in single file, their loins swaying rhythmically. The shadows dwindled. From close at hand began the rapid beat of a drum. A stir began through the village as each man herded his women and slaves to his own hut.

"O Marufa," said M'Yalu, speaking with a slight snarl, "hast thou such a powerful medicine that can surely trap the soul of Zalu Zako when perchance it wanders?"

Wandering of the soul is the native explanation for sleep.

"All things are possible to the son of M'Tungo," mumbled the old man.

Two chiefs appeared walking through the grove at a middle distance. M'Yalu glanced 'round apprehensively.

"Two tusks will I give thee," he whispered, "if thou wilt do this thing."

"Five tusks. No less, for the matter is dangerous."

"Two! Two!"

"Nay."

The old man stirred to rise.

"Three be it," gasped M'Yalu. "But I must see the magic done."

They rose together.

"Bring me of his toe-nails one paring, of his hair one, and his spittle and a footprint. Then shalt thou come with me to the sacred grove where the magic shall be done."

"*Ehh!*"

"But the three tusks must be given to Yanoka, my first wife."

M'Yalu hesitated.

"Aye, thus shall it be done," he assented reluctantly.

"It is agreed?" inquired Marufa.

"May my cord be lost," swore M'Yalu and, gesturing to the slaves, hurried away.

A slight grin flecked the old man's eyes as he turned into the hut.

"Already hath he drunken of her blood," he mumbled. "*Ya, Inkombana!* Take the tusk!"

WHEN Marufa emerged, a headdress of the tail-feathers of the green parrot, professional uniform and potent specific against evil spirits, fluffed gently as he slowly stalked toward the council-house. From the other side of a hut came M'Yalu as if he had come from a different direction. In the open gate of the royal enclosure upon his haunches sat a muscular young man tending the royal fire which fed hungrily upon small faggots.

Beyond him, across the yellow glare upon the cleared ground beneath a thatched awning, stood an idol of wood, whose lopsided mouth snarled beneath a bridgeless nose; narrow slits for eyes squinted; baby arms stuck down beside triangular breasts above a melon belly having a protuberant navel like a small cucumber—the incarnation of the Snake god, Usakuma.

Without the palisade of the sacred ground was another and taller, barring the doings of the council of witch-doctors and chiefs from the lay public, who were confined to their own huts under the penalty of a hideous death or an enormous fine, as the witch-doctors should decide.

To the rear of the idol, cross-legged against the wall of the entrance to the conical hut, were the musicians, beating a monotonous rhythm upon big and small drums and twanging a primitive lyre of five strings. Just as Marufa and M'Yalu took their

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respective places without among the wizards and the chiefs a young goat skipped into the open and stared inquisitively at the keeper of the fires.

As the man waved the animal back from the sacred ground the goat lowered its head and threatened to charge, suddenly recollected its mate lying in the shade a few feet away, and began to bleat absent-mindedly.

Gravely and silently sat the assembly: continuously throbbed the drums. The sun beat diagonally. As a lizard darted like the flash of a prism from the grass palisade the band ceased. A man emerged from behind the idol. Although the gray woolly tufts upon his chin, the sacred snakeskin around his waist above the catskin loin-cloth, the jingle of the ivory bangles on arms and ankles, and his stature imparted an air of barbaric royalty, King Mfunya Mpopo advanced with the manner of a pariah dog ordered to his master's side.

The keeper of the fires hastily threw on a handful of fagots and bowed his head as the king approached. In the center of the opening of the enclosure the king squatted down with his back to the fire, which streamed blue smoke. Not a limb or a muscle moved among the group of wizards and chiefs in the council-house. Attracted by the movement, the goat stopped bleating and stared at the king: then it charged him.

With a horrified click the keeper of the fires sprang forward. But he was not swift enough to prevent the impact of the animal's horns with the royal arm thrust out in self-defense. Three young chiefs came running: one caught up the goat and carried it away bleating bellicosely; the others knelt and while one carefully collected a gout of blood upon the king's forearm in a piece of banana leaf his companion wiped the wound.

When they were satisfied that the bleeding had ceased the pieces were meticulously wrapped in another leaf and borne away by the keeper of the fires, to be deposited in the temple: for, as every man knows, the royal blood must not be spilled upon the ground lest the site be accursed forever and, as from the tooth of the dragon of Colchis, arise from the spot ghostly warriors to annihilate the tribe.

Neither upon the face of any of the elders nor upon the features of Mfunya Mpopo, the king, had a muscle moved. Yet the incident was regarded as an evil omen.

Then suddenly did Bakahenzie, the chief witch-doctor, plumed with a tall scarlet feather in addition to the green ones and a necklace of finger bones upon his bronze chest, who sat in the center with Kawa Kendi, the king's son, upon his right and Zalu Zako, the grandson upon his left, begin to chant in a high wailing voice to the rapid rhythm of the drums:

"Is there not a shadow come over the land?
The frown of the One-not-to-be-mentioned?
I, Bakahenzie, have seen it—have seen it!"

And from the group within the council-house, immobile, came the bass chorus of assent:

"Ough! Ough!"

"Is there not a dry curse come over the land?
Is it not the hot breath of the soul of the Snake?
I, Bakahenzie, have seen it—have seen it!"

"Ough! Ough!"

"Where is the false spirit that hath sinned in the act?
He that hath sinned in the shade of the name?
I, Bakahenzie, have seen him—have seen him!"

"Ough! Ough!"

"Does not the keen sting of him scorch up the land?
Hath not the young bread of our bellies been slain?
I, Bakahenzie, have seen it—have seen it!"

"Ough! Ough!"

The throb of the drums grew faster. Bakahenzie leaped from the crowd. Immediately in front of the king he began to dance and to scream:

"Is the burden too great for the guard of the name?
Aiel Aiel
Hath the bearer, too, fumbled the weight of the world?
Aiel Aiel
Is his spirit bewitched by the soul of a girl?
Aiel Aiel
Hath his magical power been slain by the sin?
Aiel Aiel
Hath a prophet made words in the act of a goat?
Aiel Aiel
Does a savior in hairs thirst the blood of a king?
Aiel Aiel
Shall we hearken, O Chiefs, to the wish of the one?
Aiel Aiel
Or be shriveled and die in the drought of his wrath?
Aiel Aiel!"

KAWA KENDI, a man in the early middle age, powerful and lithe-limbed, sat as motionless as the king, his father, staring as did all with the fixed stare of the mystical.

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Abruptly the drums ceased. Again came a penetrating silence as Bakahenzie poised in front of Mfunya Mpopo. Then, with a piercing yell, the witch-doctor spun on his toes. The drums broke into a hysterical rhythm. Bakahenzie leaped high in the air; spun 'round and 'round screaming hoarsely; leaped and spun continually.

From the chiefs and doctors began a slight grunt; continued in crescendo until the whole body throbbed and grunted to the rhythm of the drums. Yet immobile sat Mfunya Mpopo.

Suddenly Bakahenzie changed the erratic course of his wild dance. He whirled and screamed in front of the king and then fell headlong, as if in a fit, with eyes injected and foam upon the black tufts of beard. Bakahenzie clutched his belly and began to howl like a hyena at the moon. The drums stopped. Howl and writhe did Bakahenzie as if a thousand fiends were tearing out his entrails.

He ceased and lay rigid. The hot sun seemed to quiver in the silence. The lines of every man's limbs, except the king's, were drawn in tension. Then from the prostrate body of the witch-doctor, whose legs and arms were twisted as in agony, whose dribbling mouth was closed like a vise, came a ventriloquous falsetto:

"Aie-e! Aie-e! I am the spirit of Kintu!
Aie-e! Aie-e! I am he who first was!
Aie-e! Aie-e! The keeper of the name hath betrayed me!
Aie-e! Aie-e! The bride of me is defiled!
Aie-e! Aie-e! Let him arise who is pure!
Aie-e! Aie-e! Let him arise who is bidden!
Aie-e! Aie-e! Let the fires be put out!
Aie-e! Aie-e! Let a new fire arise from the ashes!
Aie-e! Aie-e! I have spoken, I, the father of men!
Aie-e! Aie-e! I, Tarum, the soul of thy ancestors!"

From the assembly came the low stomach grunt of acceptance. In silence rose Kawa Kendi, the heir apparent. His face was as expressionless as his father's. He stepped 'round the rigid body of Bakahenzie and across the open space followed by a young man, Kingata Mata. Ten feet away from the enclosure Kingata Mata sank upon his haunches. Before Mfunya Mpopo squatted his son. They spat each in the other's hands and swallowed the spittle. Then solemnly the head of Kawa Kendi bent to the lips of Mfunya Mpopo to receive the sacred name.

In unison with Kawa Kendi rose Kingata Mata and the keeper of the fires, who to him handed a cord of twisted bark. Bending behind the king, who remained motionless with the closed eyes of one already dead, Kingata Mata swiftly adjusted the cord and handed it to the son, Kawa Kendi.

When the muscular young keeper of the fires had poured solemnly a gourd of water upon the royal fires of Mfunya Mpopo, he knelt submissively and was strangled beside his master.

From the assembly went up a great shout:

"The fire is put out!"

And from the village, listening in awe to the mighty doings, came like an echo:

"The fire is put out! *Aie! Aie-e!*"

Then shouted the elders and wizards—

"Let there be a new fire!"

Again came the wailing repetition from the village.

"Let there be a new fire!"

As in the place of fires was kindled a new fire by Kingata Mata with two sacred sticks, one of which is male and the other female, the assembled chiefs and magicians groaned mystically in allegiance to the new king-god of the unmentionable spirit of the Snake, Usakuma, the idol.

III

AT FIVE-THIRTY zu Pfeiffer was stretched in the long Bombay chair in the coolest portion of the screened veranda. On the table beside him was a tall glass, a bottle of cognac and a box of cigars; and suspended from the roof swung a canvas bag of water with a syphon attachment. A gape fly which somehow had gotten through the screen, hit the lieutenant's forehead, fell on to the book and whirred up against the wire.

"*Ach,*——!" exclaimed zu Pfeiffer irritably and shouted, "Ho, Bakunja-la!"

Instantly appeared the tall negro in white.

"You, you son of a dog! Look at that!"

Bakunjala looked, beheld the fly, leaped and caught it in his hand.

"Ow!" he exclaimed as the hornet stung him.

"*Ach,* you woman of shame, catch it instantly!"

Without hesitation Bakunjala made another grab and, clutching the fly tightly, made to open the screen door.

"Halt!" commanded the lieutenant.

Bakunjala obeyed.

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Zu Pfeiffer regarded the man standing with the wasp sting buried in his palm with a slight smile of amusement.

"It hurts?" he inquired amiably.

"*Indio, Bwana!*" asserted Bakunjala.

"Good! Now stop there."

Motionless remained the negro. Zu Pfeiffer leisurely selected a fresh cigar, lighted it, and inhaling smoke, stroked his left mustache.

"It still hurts?"

"*Indio, Bwana!*" said Bakunjala with a high note in his voice.

"Splendid!" assured the lieutenant; and after a full minute added: "Now you may go. And remember if you are frightened of a fly's pain again I will give you twenty lashes."

"*Indio, Bwana,*" answered Bakunjala humbly, and departed swiftly with the hornet in his clenched fist.

Zu Pfeiffer smiled, again stared reflectively at the violet shadows creeping lazily across the square, sipped some brandy, and picking up his book began to read.

"Excellence!"

Zu Pfeiffer frowned and looked around. Outside the screen stood Sergeant Schultz at the salute. Zu Pfeiffer nodded.

"Well?"

"Excellence," said the sergeant at attention, "the Englishman is here."

"*Ach,* tell him to go." The lieutenant drew out his gold chronometer. "It is my bath time. I can not see him."

"*Ja,* Excellence."

"Wait." Zu Pfeiffer withdrew his legs and rose. "*Açh,* tell the fool to come over here and wait till I have had my bath."

"Excellence!" agreed the sergeant and saluting, marched away.

Zu Pfeiffer entered the bungalow. Across the square came Birnier with the sergeant, who ushered him into the screened portion of the veranda.

"His Excellence gom bresently," said the sergeant and left him.

Birnier put his Tirai hat on the table and seeing no other chair, sat in the Bombay chair; looked about him; idly examined the brands on the box of cigars and the cognac and smiled.

"Makes himself mighty comfortable," he remarked to himself. "Pity he appears such a boor." He glanced at the book on the armchair. "'*Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie von Prof. Dr. Paul Deussen.*' And a philosopher, eh!"

Having little German he turned away and lighted his pipe. After a while he began to fidget, wondering how long he was to be kept waiting.

"—— the fellow!" he muttered and picked up one of the books on the table, "*Les Ba-Ronga, par A. Junod,*" opened it at random and began to read.

The shadows of one bungalow reached the veranda on the opposite side of the square. And still he read on, the dead pipe in his hand. Just as the twilight was snuffed out like a candle, a sharp step heralded the arrival of the lieutenant. Birnier rose, the book in his hand.

"Good evening, sir!"

"Good evening," responded Zu Pfeiffer who was in an undress uniform of white. "what is it that you require?"

"Well," said Birnier, "first of all I must apologize for using your chair and reading your book. Most interesting by the way."

"That is nothing," said Zu Pfeiffer, as Bakunjala came in with a lamp and a chair. "Please to be seated."

"Thank you."

Birnier took the small chair and the lieutenant the Bombay.

"I—er—I am sorry that I disturbed you this morning," began Birnier diffidently, "but I did not know——"

"That is nothing. It was the fault of the sentry. He should not have allowed you to pass."

"Regarding my application for the license, *Herr Leutnant.*"

"I regret," said zu Pfeiffer coldly, using a cigar-cutter, "that I am unable to grant you the license you ask."

"You can not grant me a trading or shooting license?"

"I regret, no."

Birnier stared.

"May I inquire why I am refused?"

"You may. We do not wish undesirables in the country."

"Undesirables!" Birnier's lips tightened. "I am afraid that I do not understand you." The lieutenant was engaged in carefully stoking his cigar. "Will you kindly afford me a reason for such an insulting remark?"

ZU PFEIFFER blew smoke luxuriously. Birnier stared for a moment, stuck his pipe in his mouth and bit the stem; removed it and snapped:

"You can have no adequate reason for

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such action. If you intend to continue this ridiculous farce I shall be compelled to make a complaint through Washington."

"Washington?" Zu Pfeiffer removed one leg from the chair rest and the cigar from his mouth. "You are an American?"

"I am."

"So? We understood that you were an English agent. You have papers?"

"Certainly. If you wish——"

"We do not demand. No. My agent was wrong. He shall be punished." Then in an amiable voice: "I, too, have been a long time in America. Please to have a cigar, Mr. Birnier."

Birnier hesitated; puzzled.

"Thank you," he said diffidently, selected one, bit off the end and spat it in the corner.

Zu Pfeiffer shuddered delicately; but as Birnier lighted his cigar he studied his face in the glow of the match; noted the breadth of the jaw, the width between the eyes and the slightly hard line at the corner of the mouth.

"And forgive me!"

Zu Pfeiffer shouted to Bakunjala.

"I presume that you have been in Africa a long time," he continued.

"Some ten years."

"You do find the Wongolo country interesting?"

"Oh, yes."

"You were there long?"

"No, I had been two years in the Congo and passed through on my way to Uganda to refit."

"*Ach.* You permit me? You are mining?"

"No." Birnier smiled thinly. "I have a professorial job in the American Museum of Natural History, anthropological department."

"Professor. *Ach!*" Zu Pfeiffer looked at him interestedly.

"Yes. That is why I was so absorbed in *Les Ba-Rongas* which I found here. You are interested in anthropology?"

"*Ach*, yes, I love to study the animals. I have a library—a small one—here. You must see it."

"Thank you."

"You were studying the animals' ways and—how d'you call it? *Das Volkshündliches*—in Wongolo?"

"Yes. I do nothing else."

"So?" Bakunjala arrived with fresh glasses and vermouth. "Which do you prefer, French or Italian, Herr Professor?"

"French, please."

"You will dine with me, please."

"That is very kind of you, Lieutenant." Birnier gazed quizzically, rather amused at the complete change of manner. "Quite charming when he likes," he reflected.

"From what part do you come, Herr Professor?" inquired Zu Pfeiffer as he set down his glass.

"Oh, I'm a Southerner. Louisiana. My name is French, you know."

"*Ach, so? Che les aimes, les Français. Les femmes sont adorables!*"

"*Oui, je les trouve comme ça!*" agreed Birnier smiling. "*Ma femme est Française.*"

"So? I, too, Professor, I am in love with a *Française*. She is a wonderful! *Superbe! Ach, entzückend!*" The lieutenant gazed into the warm darkness. "Always I see her—in the darkness, the—*chaleur—parmis les animaux.*"

In the glow of the lamp the blue eyes were soft, the feminine lips curved in a tender smile as he murmured:

"Die Jahre kommen und gehen,
Geschlechter steigen in's Grab,
Doch nimmer vergeht die Liebe,
Die ich im Herzen hab.'
Nur einmal noch möcht' ich dich sehen,
Und sinken vor dir auf's Knie,
Und sterbend, zu dir sprechen:
'Madame, ich liebe Sie!'"

"Thank you," said Birnier quietly. "I, too, would say that."

"*Ach, sprechen Sie Deutsch?*" demanded zu Pfeiffer quickly.

"No, unfortunately I don't speak it, but I understand a little; and particularly Heine."

"*Ach, Gott!*"

The note was of satisfaction. A gong sounded. Zu Pfeiffer turned sharply:

"Come, Herr Professor, let us go to dinner. You would wish to wash?"

The bungalow, unusually lofty, was divided into three compartments. Throughout the ceiling, made of stout white calico to shelter from snakes and the continual dust from the wood-borers, was suspended from the rafters like the roof of a marquee tent. The center room was furnished with cane lounge-chairs like a smoking-room and decorated with skins, native musical instruments, spears and shields; drums served as small tables with elephant toe-nails for ash-trays.

In the bedroom was a brass bedstead and

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mosquito-net. Behind was a bath-room having upon the rafters a corrugated cistern, which gave force for a shower. The towels and appointments were specklessly clean. When Birnier appeared he found zu Pfeiffer sprawled in the lounge. Upon a red lacquer tray upon a great war-drum covered with the striped skin of a zebra was a crystal liqueur set and a large, silver box of Egyptian cigarets.

"*Ach*, Professor," said he, "it is good to speak to a white man again." By which he meant an equal. "Please to be seated, I beg you. A little liqueur is good for the *aperitif* and a cigaret; for there is no time for another cigar."

As Birnier sat he remarked the blond head of the lieutenant in his meticulous uniform touched with gold, and caught a glimpse of the jeweled bracelet of ivory and the Chinese finger-nail.

ANOTHER summons of the gong brought zu Pfeiffer to his feet. He led his guest out through the side veranda along a screened porch to the mess-room, built away from the main building to avoid the plague of flies. The table was set in immaculate linen a-glitter with glass and decorated with a profusion of wild orchids.

Behind each chair stood a tall negro in spotless white, immobile. Upon each plate were *hors d'œuvres* of anchovy and cheese upon a patterned piece of toast. Salted almonds, sweets and olives were in green china; wine-glasses of three kinds. Broiled fish followed the soup.

"So, Professor," remarked the lieutenant, "you will go back some day to Wongolo?"

"Yes, I—unless I discover some tribe who have a more interesting system of—er—theology."

"They are a powerful tribe, *nicht wahr?*"

"Oh, yes, very. Their system insures unity which provides for concerted action. Here, I believe it is different."

"Yes, yes; they are poor here. Each village was at war with the other—before we came. Their superstitions are not—how would you say it?"

"Systematized?"

"Yes. They have neither any supreme chief nor god. There, you see," he added smiling, "that autocracy is the only form of government. Democracy—pah! I apologize, Professor!"

"Please, don't," replied Birnier. "Although, of course, I can not agree with you."

"But the Wongolo—they have a god and king."

"Yes, the king-god system. One of the most interesting I have ever encountered or read of."

"You did see the king-god, Mfunya Mpopo?"

"Oh, no. He is forbidden to be seen by a foreigner—a similar law to that of the Medes—only by the witch-doctors—and by the people once a year at the harvest festival. That is why I intend to go back. It is impossible to procure reliable data upon their customs, practises and real beliefs without—without winning their confidence. That is my mission."

"*Ach*, I do not longer wonder, Herr Professor, that you were most justly annoyed. *Ach*, yes. But please do not worry about your ridiculous license. It is not necessary in my jurisdiction, I assure you. You may come and go as you please, shoot what you wish. I will always be so glad to help so distinguished a professor."

"I thank you very much."

"*Ach*, it is nothing. And perhaps when you are there you will be so kind as to write to me? To tell me things that are not known—so that I may, too, continue to study the animals—again what is it? *Das Volkshündliches?*"

"Folklore, isn't it?"

"*Ach*, yes. Please to have some more wine, *Herr Professor*. Please, I insist. It is the real Mumm. That is a promise. *Ach*, I thank you. And if—— Were there any others—whites—when you were there?"

"Only one."

"Where was he, I wonder?"

"On the southern boundary."

"Near Lake Kivu?"

"Yes."

"*Ach*, Saunders," muttered zu Pfeiffer.

"I beg your pardon?"

"It was nothing, but I do not like to have—alien traders in my province. They are missionaries and traders—spies."

"Indeed."

"Yes. It is always so. *Herr Professor*, I ask you a favor. Will you be so kind as to write to me if some other white comes into the Wongolo country?"

"I shall be delighted," said Birnier. "Do you intend to come there some day, *Herr Lieutenant?*"

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"*Ach*, no, it is not—not our territory; although I should very much like to see it and to shoot. There is much elephant there?"

"Oh, yes, quantities."

"Please to try some of this curried egg, *Herr Professor*. It is excellent, I assure you. I thank you. And rubber, is there much rubber, there?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Now I wonder if you noticed whether it was tree or vine?"

"I really couldn't say." Birnier smiled thinly. "I am not interested in such things."

Zu Pfeiffer glanced at him keenly and changed the subject. When they had finished the best boned chicken that Birnier had ever tasted in Africa, zu Pfeiffer rose.

"Let us go to my study, Herr Professor, if you so permit, for some coffee and a little good port—and I will have the pleasure to show you my little library."

"I should be delighted," assented Birnier willingly.

Around the white walls of the cool room which was zu Pfeiffer's study ran low book-shelves made of native wood, containing some hundreds of volumes which had been carried five hundred miles on the heads of porters. Grass mats and leopard skins were upon the floor.

In the center, upon a heavy table, was a green-shaded lamp set in a silver-mounted elephant's foot. Along the bookcases were various odd curios, and a coffee service in copper. On the south wall was a large oil portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm II.; upon opposite bookcases were marbles of Bismarck and Voltaire staring forever into each other's eyes; and in the center of the other wall a photograph of a woman set in an ivory frame made from a section of a tusk.

ZU PEFIFFER made himself more agreeable than ever. They talked mythology and folklore. With the port zu Pfeiffer rose, an erect, martial figure above the glow of the lamp.

"Herr Professor!" he remarked. "I beg you!"

Slightly bewildered, Birnier rose, too, glass in hand.

Wheeling with military precision, zu Pfeiffer raised his glass to the great portrait on the wall.

"*Ihre Hochheit!*"

Politely Birnier followed suit, his democratic ideas slightly astonished at the persistent veneration of the kingly office; almost, he reflected, as absorbing as the native superstition of the king-god.

Then zu Pfeiffer turned to the left and lifting his glass to the portrait in the ivory frame, drank silently.

"I was wondering, Professor," he remarked as he resumed his seat without explanation, "from what—college, you call it?—you come?"

"Harvard," said Birnier, rather amused, and noticing that as a true connoisseur zu Pfeiffer refrained from smoking while drinking his port.

"*Ach*, I have met many of the Harvard men—at Washington."

"Ah, you know Washington?"

"Yes, I was there nearly two years."

Zu Pfeiffer drained his port, selected a cigar, lighted it and gazed abstractedly toward the ivory frame. The lips softened and he smiled gently.

"Do you know many people there?"

"Oh, a few."

"*Ach*. I wonder. You must know that I met her there, my divine Lucille."

"Lucille! How strange! That is my wife's name, too."

"Really?" Zu Pfeiffer still stared dreamily at the corner. He gathered up his legs, and rose like an eager boy. "Permit me, Herr Professor, she is so—so——"

He bent over the portrait and struck a match. Politely Birnier stooped to look. He saw a portrait of a French woman in an evening gown, a woman of charm with the vivacious eyes and tempting mouth of the coquette.

"My God!"

Birnier bent closer and stared intently. Across the corner of the photograph was written in ink in familiar characters the words "*A toi*, Lucille!"

"Lucille!" he gasped. "Lu—— Good God!" He stood up abruptly, "I—What in God's name— Who is this woman?"

The match fell to the floor. He was vaguely conscious of the tall white figure stiffening as a dog does.

"That lady is my fiancée."

"Fiancée! She—— Good God, you're mad! She is my wife!"

"Wife! ——, *der Teufel soll's holen! Das ist der Schweinhund!*"

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The gutturals exploded from zu Pfeiffer. The sleeve of his white jacket quivered; then the arm came up to the gold-braided chest and jerked out a silver whistle. He hesitated, glaring at the astonished figure of Birnier. Suddenly zu Pfeiffer sat down by the table. His blue eyes were as hard as malachite.

"Sit down!" he commanded harshly.

Birnier did not appear to notice him. He struck a match and bent over the photograph again.

"Good God!" he muttered. "I—I—don't understand—oh, God!"

"Sit down!" shouted zu Pfeiffer.

Birnier merely blinked at him.

"Would you mind explaining?" demanded Birnier.

"Explain! Is your wife Mademoiselle Lucille Charltrain?"

"Why of course! That is her professional name. But how on earth has this mistake happened? I—I—— That is her writing—but it can't be. I mean it's impossible." Birnier put his hand to his head. "I—— God, it can't be! I or you must be mad! Which is——"

A prolonged whistle startled him. He saw the whistle at zu Pfeiffer's lips, but the act conveyed no meaning. He turned away, struck another match and peered again at the photograph.

"Lucille! Lucille!" he whispered. "What on earth——"

A powerful clutch closed upon his arm. He was whirled backward into a chair. For a moment he was too dazed to comprehend what had happened. He saw zu Pfeiffer's face. The sentries over his mustaches quivered like a row of fixed bayonets. The eyes seemed needle-points. Then the fact of the assault penetrated beyond the unprecedented incident of finding his wife's photograph in another man's room. The ugly line about the mouth hardened. He rose slowly.

"Am I to understand that you have laid your hands upon your guest?" he began, stuttering over the choice of words. "I am—I am——"

The scuffle of many feet interrupted him. Into the room rushed Sergeant Schultz and several soldiers. Zu Pfeiffer stood up and pointed.

"Sergeant, arrest that man!" he barked.

"*Ja*, Excellence!"

The sergeant saluted and barked at the *askaris*. Birnier gazed stupidly at the uniforms around him as if unable to comprehend. He looked at zu Pfeiffer, who stood erect, his face lost in shadow above the lamp, and back at the soldiers.

"Is this a joke, Lieutenant—or are you mad?" he demanded angrily.

"Sergeant, put that man in the guard-room," zu Pfeiffer commanded.

Zu Pfeiffer sat down with his back to Birnier and facing the photograph.

Birnier's face twitched; he raised his arm. The sergeant barked and the line of bayonets lowered menacingly.

"You gom with me, Herr American," ordered the sergeant.

Birnier controlled himself.

"One moment, Sergeant, please! Herr Lieutenant, on what charge do you arrest me?" The perfect lines of the white-clad back did not quiver. "Very good! I give you warning, Herr Lieutenant, that you have committed an assault upon an American citizen."

"Gom! Gom!" insisted the sergeant impatiently.

Birnier raised his head and walked as indicated by the sergeant.

As the footsteps plodded across the square zu Pfeiffer turned to the table, examining his left hand.

"*Ach*," he growled gutturally, "the dirty pig has broken my nail."

IV

OVER the City of the Snake the sun sank red, dry, leaving the Place of Kings hot in the electric air of magic and world happenings.

The people were still confined to their huts, trembling in the knowledge that for three days love must be eschewed, no water drawn nor any food cooked with fire; nor might any man, woman, or child leave the precincts of the compound.

All the night Bakuma crouched in her hut, listening in awe to the swish of the ghosts through the air, to the moans, groans and howls of the wizards doing battle with them. Tightly did she clutch the amulet as she strove to conceal curiosity regarding the welfare of Zalu Zako; for did her mother suspect the presence of this evil spirit would she cause Bakuma to take a concoction of the castor-oil plant in order that the demon might be expelled; and the

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more to aid her conquer this unlawful impulse to peep without did she most persistently recite to herself the fate of the daughter of M'Tasa, the foolish Tangulbala whose body had been discovered impaled upon a tree by the angry spirits of the dead because she had rashly ventured forth after the death of the grandfather of Zalu Zako.

Bakuma dared not mention the name of one who had died; for, as everybody knows, such an impious person runs the risk of summoning the ghost to his presence.

The putting out of the fire had changed Bakuma's prospects; had made Zalu Zako heir apparent which implied half a hundred things, but chief of which was that now he was compelled to chose his chief wife, she who would be the mother of the 'divine' son of the Snake: an alteration that excited Bakuma to frantic clutching at the amulet.

Would the charm work or would it not? How to insure that it would be efficacious? Marufa's greedy demands worried her. She feared that even if she obtained the goat that he might require something else as well. Anybody knows how greedy doctors are and how wealthy. He would be sure to increase the fee now that he knew what the prize was.

Bakuma possessed only one really valuable thing, and that was a charm against sterility; but this was the last thing that she wished to part with, for the only possible occurence that could ever divorce her from the position of chief wife, once she had won Zalu Zako, would be failure to provide the male heir.

She was impatient, too, at the delay of the three days' tabu. Time was important. Soon she would be under the ban of the unclean and consequently have her liberty curtailed again, and she feared that possibly the charm might grow stale.

But the greatest need for speed was M'Yalu's suit. As her father was dead she belonged to his brother. Already M'Yalu had offered four tusks of ivory and three oxen for her, but her uncle was lazy, mean, and greedy. Fortunately, he thought that by waiting he could get double that amount.

Yet M'Yalu might suddenly decide to pay the price demanded. Once Zalu Zako had selected her as his official bride then her uncle dared not accept any other man's offer; no matter how wealthy he might be; besides the old man would not wish to refuse a relationship with the heir to the king-godhood.

Again her cousin was sick and Yabolo, the wizard, had pronounced that her soul had wandered in sleep down to the river and had been swallowed by a fish. Yabolo had caught the fish and lured the soul into a tree, but now he wanted such a big price to restore the errant soul to the girl that her father, Bakuma's uncle, would not pay it. So she would surely die; and then they would all have to be exorcised, which would curtail her liberty for another four days.

Indeed, with all these actual and possible delays it seemed to Bakuma that some one had made much magic against her, and, unless she knew who it was, how could she employ the same means to annul the terrible effects? And more, how could she obtain the wherewithal to satisfy the demands of the best doctors? Life was very complicated to the daughter of Bakala.

Upon the hill of Mfunya Mpopo had the magicians been busy all the afternoon after the "putting out of the fire." Zalu Zako and the chiefs also were barred from the sacred enclosure, for, being mere laymen, they could not hope to withstand the evil spirits of the dead. Even Bakahenzie and the inner circle of the cult were compelled to employ the most potent methods of protection to preserve them from being bewitched or slain outright.

After Bakahenzie, Marufa, Yabolo, and two other master magicians had released the souls of the dead king by making incisions in the body with a sacred spear to the thrumming of the drums, the mighty groaning of the other wizards, and the persistent wailing of the dead man's wives, the corpse was born by twelve doomed slaves to the temple and there interred with the gouts of blood shed by the prophetic goat, the nail parings and hairs, clippings of his lifetime, and his personal effects.

Inscrutable before the new fire tended by Kingata Mata, facing Zalu Zako, M'Yalu, and the lay chiefs, sat Kawa Kendi, while other slaves were tearing down his old hut, erecting a temporary palisade around the quarters of his wives, who were forever forbidden to him, and beginning the building of the new temple.

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AS THE violet shadows were creeping from one hut to another did Bakahenzie and his satellites return from their ghoulish offices of the dead. Zalu Zako, the chiefs, and the magicians arose to the wild beating of the drums and the wailing chant of the hereditary troubadour with the five-stringed lyre. With Kingata Mata carrying a brand of the newly-lighted sacred fire was Kawa Kendi led in procession through the deserted village to his own hill.

Under the hard stars set in a dry sapphire the sacred fire cast yellow flickers upon the carven features of Kawa Kendi. In the still heat the distant wailing of the women from the opposite hill drifted into the continuous throb of the drums, the plaintive wail of the singer and the hysterical groaning of the magicians yelling ferociously ever and again to intimidate the balked spirits around the magic circle.

Then was a white goat selected from the flock of Kawa Kendi slain by Zalu Zako, disemboweled by Bakahenzie, and the entrails rubbed upon the brow, the chest and the right arm of the slayer of men, a ceremony of purification designed to protect the royal executioner by appeasing the justly angry spirits of the dead.

To Marufa were given other parts of the slain beast to smear likewise upon Zalu Zako, the son; and Yabolo ran screaming with portions to the quarters of the women of Kawa Kendi, for must every blood relative be so enchanted lest the vengeful ghost seek substitute victims.

As a pallid moon rose, as if fearfully, above the deep ultramarine of the banana fronds a magic potion was brewed from certain herbs in enchanted water with which the king, Zalu Zako, and the king's wives, were laved. Amid a tempest of screams and drums rose Kawa Kendi purified, to be driven by Bakahenzie and the wizards back to the hill of his father, leaving the assembled lay chiefs squatting humbly and in great fear of the spirits abroad in the night.

While the procession leaped and twirled, screamed and groaned to the frantic thrum of the drums through the blue darkness, the magicians ran and pranced through and around the village, seeking any blasphemer who dared to look upon sacred things; banging on hut doors and shaking thatches the more to terrify the shrinking inhabitants.

Without the gate of the old enclosure all remained, except Bakahenzie and the four wizards, who encircled Kawa Kendi and Kingata Mata and hustled them across the clearing. With his back to the dim form of the idol stood Kawa Kendi as behind it grouped the master magicians. From the base Bakahenzie took two large gourds and gave them into the keeping of Kingata Mata.

Came an abrupt cessation of the drums and cries. The wailing of the women behind the temple died. The tense air pulsed with electricity. A cock crowed feebly in the village. Then, at a rippling splash of the drums and the sudden screaming of the wizards, they began to push the idol. The wooden feet had already been loosened in the earth by the slaves.

The idol began to totter. Louder screamed the magicians; faster fled the drums. Slowly the idol leaned and subsided on to the shoulders of Kawa Kendi. Grasping the mass firmly upon his bent back he bore the burden out of the enclosure and down the hill.

Behind his unsteady steps pranced and yelled the magicians with more prodigious a noise than ever before as they scourged the king's legs and arms with cords of fiber. Through the listening village panted the king. As he gasped slowly up the hill the thrashing was redoubled. But into the new enclosure the king staggered, let slide the heavy mass into a hole prepared for the sacred feet, and, gleaming blue points of sweat in the faint moon, let out a hoarse yell, proving to the assembly of magicians and chiefs that he was powerful enough to bear the burden of the world and moreover that none could wrest his office from him.

No time was there given for the incarnation of a god to recoup from his labors. The motive principle of the accusation and the death of the king, Mfunya Mpopo, was the drought. That only concerned the soul of the tribe in the person of Bakahenzie. For him and his brethren of the inner cult, while certain pretensions to power over the supernatural were for the "good of the people," the truths of magic and divine functions were inviolable. The person of Kawa Kendi, heretofore merely one in whom was a potentiality, became *ipso facto* after the purification and "coronation" the incarnation of the god. Kawa Kendi

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had crossed from the comparatively safe haven of the potential into divine activity.

Also there were, as ever, political reasons for the hastening of the offices of the god. Should the new king-god fail, as his father had done, to accomplish the duties of the rain-maker, then, as no precedent had ever been known for the failure of two kings in succession, an enemy might accuse Bakahenzie of having committed some fault which had displeased the Unmentionable One. Politics, religion, and magic are sometimes inseparable.

Therefore, as soon as Zalu Zako had witnessed the ascent of his father into the dangerous heaven of the gods was he bidden as the victim apparent, to produce the sacred rain-making paraphernalia.

From the keeper of the Fires, Kingata Mata, Zalu Zako received one of the large gourds, which he deposited at the feet of his father, squatting before the sacred fire and retired to the space immediately outside the enclosure among the other lay chiefs. Only Bakahenzie and the four of the inner cult were permitted within the enclosure.

Fumbling within the pot, Kawa Kendi produced a bundle of twigs tied with banana fiber, which he unbound and cast into the fire. The herbs smoldered and sent up a pungent smoke, forming a heavy cloud, like some strange blue tree sheltering the form of the idol against the green sky. Save for the faint wailing of the distant women there was silence in which an owl screeched harshly, a good omen. Little flames flickered. The smoke grew denser, obliterating the figure of the king. The drums began to mutter, Bakahenzie cried out in a loud voice:

"O great God, the Unmentionable One! Let thy powers be made manifest!"

THE keeper of the fires came forward upon his hands and thrust the other sacred gourd in front of the king, a deep one containing water, and a wand made from a sacred tree which had upon the end a crook. To the groaning of the magicians the king took from the one gourd two stones of quartz and granite, the male and the female, and spat upon each one thus placing part of his royal body upon them; then did he put them in the gourd and pour water, as he chanted:

"Go forth, male spirit, with my ghost in thy hand!
Go forth, female soul, with my ghost in thy breast!
Make love together in the shade of great Tarum
Of him whom fear of me hath frozen the breath!
"Ough! Ough!

"Go forth, male spirit, with my ghost in thy hand!
Go forth, female soul, with my ghost in thy breast!
Love one another that the crops of our land
May marry as well and be as fruitful as ye!
"Ough! Ough!

"Go forth, male spirit, with my ghost in thy hand!
Go forth, female soul, with my ghost in thy breast!
Rise high up to heaven, and mount on the black back
Of the bird of the wet wind—poke your hands in his eyes!
"Ough! Ough!"

Save for the distant wailing there was the silence of those waiting for a miracle. In the sky at the back of the idol was the paling of dawn. Suddenly, as if exasperated by the non-obedience of the elements, Kawa Kendi sprang to his feet with the magic wand in his right hand, turned and stared apparently into the face of the idol.

For fully two minutes he stood as if carven while the doctors and the chiefs moaned dismally. Around him like a pall still hovered the smoke of the magic fire. From the village a cock's challenge was answered from point to point. Then shooting out his right hand Kawa Kendi made gestures as if hooking something invisible and began to scream furiously:

"Thus do I, the One-not-to-be-mentioned,
Drag forth from the belly of the heaven
The Disobedient One, the Lazy One!
The Insolent One who sinneth in sleep!
The Black-Snouted One whose udders are choked!
The Womanly One whose nipples are dry;
The Sluttish One who refuseth her milk!
Come forth lest I give thee sorrow and pain
And make thee to weep the bitterest tears!
Come forth lest I tear out thy black bosom!
Tear out thy guts for a feast unto Tarum:
Come forth lest I throw off the yoke of the burden
Of the earth and the sky upon thy sweating black belly!"

In a slight puff of wind the smoke, laced-edged with the dawn light, swayed, seeming to twine about the figure of the king, as he stood with the wand outheld as if firmly hooked in the entrails of the recalcitrant elements.

Against the rose of the dawn appeared a dark line which increased as the magicians and chiefs moaned and groaned in sympathy with the furious efforts of the rain-maker, who threatened and pulled with the magic wand so that everybody

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could see that he was indeed dragging the reluctant clouds from over the end of the earth. As the dark mass swelled the more he wrestled and screamed abuse at the dilatory spirit of the rain.

And behold! Within half an hour great black spirits sailed across the scarlet sunrise and wept exceeding bitterly; while from the village went up a great shout of praise to the triumphant king still prancing and cursing to such good effect upon the hill.

THE same vast balloons of sepia rolled over the lake, vomited a host of liquid ramrods, and, after short intervals of brilliant glare, were succeeded by others. The gutters of the station were turned into burbling brooks and the grass plot into a morass.

On the screened south veranda sat zu Pfeiffer in his pink silk pajamas, a scowl upon his brow. He sipped his café cognac distastefully and inhaled a cigaret so fiercely that the heat burned his tongue. He had not slept. Yet the broken nail on the left little finger had been cut and polished.

Half the night he had sat before the photograph in the ivory frame, pondering upon and rehearsing the past, muttering aloud to Lucille, sometimes words of love and sometimes savage curses; wondering what she was doing and where she was; gritting his teeth at visions which aroused his insane jealousy; calculating what the consequences of his action would be were he to obey the impulse that had leaped into his mind in the first flush of temper.

If he were to release the prisoner the fellow would probably expect an explanation and an apology, which was of course, out of the question. No, he must carry out the thing thoroughly without leaving any chance for the man to make trouble at the coast or through the embassy at Washington; at all costs not through Washington. As for Birnier, he merely existed as a person whose feelings had nothing whatever to do with zu Pfeiffer.

With the greening of the moon zu Pfeiffer had retired, and as he lay sleeplessly watching the pallor of the dawn he had savagely corroborated the decision. Now the roar of the deluge appeared to him in the light of an abettor to his plan. He watched the gray wall of rain with a satisfaction, stroking the left sentry mustache as if to tame the fierce bristles of an outraged dignity.

When he emerged from his bath the pink of his face appeared to have spread to the whites of his eyes, which Bakunjala noted with sullen fear. Between the storms the sun glared yellow upon the smoking earth. Across the square squelched zu Pfeiffer to the orderly room. He grunted at Sergeant Schultz' greeting and sprawled in the chair. When Schultz proffered him some official documents he waved them aside irritably.

"Bring the prisoner to the court, Sergeant. I will try him immediately."

"Excellence," said the sergeant and saluted. Then, "What charge am I to enter against him, Excellence?"

"Arms and liquor-running," responded zu Pfeiffer quickly. "I hold papers which prove the case completely. Moreover, you will see that Ali ben Hassan and others are prepared to testify. But —the charge will be margined as political: not criminal. Understand, Sergeant?"

"Perfectly, Excellence. Ali ben Hassan and the others have to testify before your Excellence now?"

"There will be no need."

"Very good, Excellence."

"And Sergeant, what is the personnel of the launch and the prisoner's party?"

"The launch returned immediately to Jinja, Excellence, as soon as the prisoner had landed.

"*Ach*, good."

"The prisoner has a considerable battery and equipment and provisions; a head man and personal servants. He intended to obtain porters here, Excellence."

Zu Pfeiffer meditated, tapping the desk.

"What is the head man?"

"Babeeba, Excellence."

"*Ach*, good, and the servants?"

"One is a Wongolo youth, the others are mixed Balegga and Kavirondo."

"Arrest them all and see that none gets away."

"Excellence!"

Schultz saluted and departed. Zu Pfeiffer scowled at the glare which was suddenly extinguished by a fresh wall of falling water. Zu Pfeiffer lighted a cigar and waited. Presently the sergeant returned in a waterproof cape, dripping, and announced that the prisoner was ready. Zu Pfeiffer gathered up his long legs and marched stiffly into the court-house adjoining.

Upon a slight daïs was a large desk and a cane armchair beneath the imperial eagles

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and a portrait of the Kaiser Wilhelm II. Upon a bench against a bare wall sat Birnier, pale, stubble-bearded and tense-eyed with anger; beside him was Sergeant Schneider, for it is not usual etiquette to put a white prisoner in charge of a black guard.

The grizzled sergeant stood stiffly at attention, which zu Pfeiffer acknowledged, and, although he did not look directly at Birnier's straight gaze, he scowled as if he had expected him to salute the majesty of the judge as well.

But as zu Pfeiffer mounted the step to the chair of justice he looked straight at the portrait of his Kaiser, stopped, and looked again. He hesitated; then wheeled abruptly and barked—

"Sergeant, bring the prisoner to the orderly room!"

Then he marched back again.

IN THE orderly room Birnier was placed between Sergeant Schultz at his table and Sergeant Schneider by the door. Birnier watched zu Pfeiffer intently, but zu Pfeiffer regarded him icily, as if he were a piece of furniture. Without a word Birnier reached over and lifted a chair. Sergeant Schneider started forward, evidently thinking that the prisoner was about to attack his officer. Birnier said acidly:

"Do not fear. I merely wish to sit down."

Zu Pfeiffer scowled, but he made no objection. He took up some papers at random and began to peruse them. Said Birnier sharply—

"When you have finished with this farce I shall be obliged if you will kindly explain your insane actions?"

The *tap-tap* of a typewriter sounded from another room. A fly buzzed. Zu Pfeiffer's eyes did not blink. The sergeants stared woodenly in front of them. Birnier looked from one to the other, bit his lips, opened them and then exclaimed in exasperation—

"What in —— do you mean by this —— nonsense?"

The *tap-tap* continued. The fly buzzed irritatingly. Birnier clutched his fists to control the wave of passion. But he sat still. Another storm so darkened the room that zu Pfeiffer could scarcely have seen the print, but apparently he read on. The deluge roared, passed, and the glare came as suddenly again. Zu Pfeiffer looked up and said in German—

"Sergeant, record the opening of the court."

"Excellence!" assented the sergeant and bent his pen ready to write.

"The prisoner, a Swiss subject——"

"I am American, as I have told you," said Birnier in leashed anger.

"A pseudo trader and hunter, named Carl Bornstadt," continued zu Pfeiffer imperturbably, "is charged under subsection seventy-nine of section eight with supplying guns and liquor to the native subjects of his Imperial Majesty."

"Good God!" began Birnier.

But as he realized zu Pfeiffer's purpose and his own position, he closed his lips tightly.

Methodically Sergeant Schultz finished the entries and waited. Zu Pfeiffer stroked his favorite mustache and considered. He glanced once at Birnier, but without a vestige of expression and continued:

"Make a special note, Sergeant, that we have reason to suspect that the prisoner is in the political service of—" a slight smile flicked the lieutenant's face—"in the service of the Portuguese and so under subsection one hundred and nine of section eight, I am referring the case to Dar-es-Salaam for investigation; witnesses, documentary and personal, to accompany the prisoner. Owing to unusual pressure of service we are unable to afford the prisoner, although apparently of European descent, a white guard; therefore, Sergeant Schneider will detail a corporal and six men for the duty."

He paused. The sergeant's pen scratched on. Zu Pfeiffer lighted a cigar and added as impersonally:

"The prisoner and escort will leave tomorrow morning. Sergeant Schneider, remove the prisoner!"

Birnier's face was a little paler, the eyes were slightly more bloodshot; but he did not attempt to say one word. Zu Pfeiffer rose. The sergeants stood to attention and saluted. As he left the room toward the court-house, he smiled with slight satisfaction as the gruff voice of Sergeant Schneider barked:

"Prisoner, 'shun! Right turn! Quick marrch!"

But zu Pfeiffer did not remain long in the court-house. After fidgeting about with papers on the table and reprimanding Sergeant Schultz because he had not arranged

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the next native case to his satisfaction, he rose abruptly and in the brilliant glare marched swiftly across the square without his helmet, and into his study. There he straddled a chair and leaned on the back sucking a dead cigar absent-mindedly.

As he stared at the portrait in the ivory frame the blue eyes grew soft and the delicate lips quivered like a child about to weep. He sighed heavily and then, rapping out an oath, rose violently, overturning the chair, poured out a half-glass of neat cognac, and drank it at a gulp.

As he neared the court-house the sentry turning at the end of his short beat was so startled at the proximity of the commander, or so incompletely disciplined, that he became flurried. Zu Pfeiffer halted heels together and haughtily watched the fumbled efforts to salute. The bolt caught in the man's tunic. Then gold flashed in the sun as the *sjambok* descended.

Zu Pfeiffer walked on unconcernedly leaving a gray weal on the terrified native's face. To Sergeant Schultz, rigid in the doorway, he snapped an order to have fifty lashes given to the "clumsy dog."

Sentences were harsher than usual that morning. All the native world about him knew that a demon had taken possession of the Eater-of-men. He was usually inhabited by an evil spirit, but this time the demon of Bakka, who, as everybody knows, tears the vitals with hot claws, making the victim to have fits, to foam at the mouth, to be quite mad, had entered the white man.

Bakunjala, coming to the court-house with vermouth and biscuits at eleven o'clock distinctly saw the devil glaring through zu Pfeiffer's eyes and was so scared that he let fall the tray, which was the the reason that he also was doomed to have twenty-five lashes that evening.

Even the stolid Sergeant Schultz remarked that the lieutenant had gotten a touch of the sun; but the grizzled Schneider, who came from Lithuania, opined that the commander had left his knife edge-uppermost.

When zu Pfeiffer went across to tiffin the hot sun had dried up the gutters and the plot of grass. He did not return to the court-house, much to the gratitude of many innocent and guilty. After drinking more wine than usual he lay down for the midday siesta and fell asleep.

But at five he awoke, with a mouth like a burned cooking-pot and the temper of the said devil. He yelled for Bakunjala, who came, so trembling with fright that he stuttered. Zu Pfeiffer threw a glass which missed him and broke a mirror.

"Another seven years' ill luck!" shouted zu Pfeiffer, sitting on the bed in his shirt.

He glared at Bakunjala, who stood as if petrified in the door, too terror-stricken to flee, convinced that he would be blamed for breaking the glass.

"You—you superstitious nigger!" yelled zu Pfeiffer in German and added more calmly in Kiswahili, "Fetch me a brandy soda, *upesi*, you son of a baboon!"

"*Bwana!*" exclaimed Bakunjala and fled gladly.

ZU PFEIFFER sat and scowled at the scattered pieces of mirror until Bakunjala arrived with the drink. An hour later he emerged in his immaculate undress uniform and sat on the north veranda, drank vermouth and smoked cigars, staring out across the flat swamp, where the pewter of the lake was flecked with silver and blood of the sinking sun. From beyond the fort came the yaps of the drill-sergeant, busy in the cool of the afternoon. At the bark of the relieving guard zu Pfeiffer rose and walked around the house, to watch with tetchy eyes the saluting of the flag.

As he stalked off to dinner in the mess-room eyes which glimmered in the darkness watched him. Bakunjala, after receiving punishment, was indisposed; in fact, incapable of attending to his duties in the sprightly manner required. Another servant who had taken his place was nervous of the probable consequences, and had a keen eye for the appearance of the devil so realistically described by Bakunjala.

But the demon apparently slept, for zu Pfeiffer took the dishes placed before him with an unaccustomed meekness, pushed them away absent-mindedly, and, rising, retired to his study. Even when the deputy brought the wrong bottle he reprimanded him mildly without taking his eyes off the photograph in the ivory frame.

Yet with the port he did not omit to rise and heels together, raise his glass to the "*Ihre Hochheit.*" Then sprawling in the chair, he began to drink and to smoke steadily.

As the notes of the last post stuttered out

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in the clammy stillness he summoned the "boy" and bade him fetch Sergeant Schultz. At the sound of the sergeant's steps on the veranda zu Pfeiffer stiffened up and patted his lips as if desiring to erase the lines that were graven there; and with one foot pushed the chair from the direct angle to the photograph.

"Take a cigar," said zu Pfeiffer when the man had entered.

The words were rather an order than an invitation. Sergeant Schultz obeyed. Zu Pfeiffer smoked reflectively, still regarding the photograph out of the corner of his eyes as if unable to resist the fascination.

"How long have you been in this benighted country, Sergeant?"

"Nine years, Excellence."

"You wish to retire on the pension at the year's term?"

"I have not seen my wife and children for three years, Excellence."

"You shall have special leave as soon as the Wongolo affair is over."

"I thank you, Excellence."

"And I will recommend you for the special colonial service medal and pension."

"I thank you, Excellence."

"Take a drink, Sergeant."

"I thank you, Excellence."

The sergeant obeyed with some semblance of initiative and he remarked that the lieutenant drank half a tumbler of neat brandy at a gulp. As if to drag himself away from the contemplation of the photograph, zu Pfeiffer stood up and sat on the arm of the chair with his face in shadow above the lamp. He looked keenly at the sergeant as he said sharply:

"You are quite aware of the regulations regarding official secrets, Sergeant?"

"Why, yes, Excellence."

As the sergeant paused to answer, with the glass in his hand, there was just a suspicion of surprize in the tone.

"Good! Don't forget it!" A note of menace was in zu Pfeiffer's voice. He added more mildly, "Political reasons may cause stringent measures sometimes."

"Yes, Excellence."

Zu Pfeiffer smoked, coldly regarding the sergeant.

"Whom is Sergeant Schneider detailing for the prisoner's escort tomorrow?"

"Corporal Inyira, Excellence."

"A long-service man?"

"*Ja*, Excellence."

"Good. Go and fetch him here."

Not a shadow of surprize showed on Sergeant Schultz's face as he departed. Zu Pfeiffer smoked hard and drank another brandy thirstily with a slight unsteadiness as he lifted the glass to his mouth. The sergeant returned and stood at attention just within the door.

"The man is here, Excellence."

Zu Pfeiffer nodded.

"Forward, quick, marrch!" commanded the sergeant in a muffled bark. "Halt!"

"Very good, Sergeant. You may wait."

Schultz saluted and retired without. Zu Pfeiffer regarded intently a tall powerfully built native in uniform standing as if he had a bayonet beneath his chin. There was a slight nervousness about the blues of the eyes as he squinted in the attempt to look straight ahead and to watch the commander at the same time. One nostril was slit; in the lobes of the ears the man wore three can keys and the temples were tattooed with the tribal scars.

"Corporal Inyira!" said zu Pfeiffer sharply. The long body twitched at the voice. "You are to leave tomorrow for Dar-es-Salaam and you will take as a prisoner a white man, who has been taking your tribe as slaves and selling them to the Abyssinians. The Bwana Mkubwa protects you from these evil white men and Arabs. You know that?" sharply.

"*Bwana!*"

"Very good. You know what would happen to you if you were sold as a slave? You have had many brothers who have been sold to the Abyssinians?"

"*Bwana!* Many, *Bwana!*"

"Very good. Now, listen! This white man is very bad. He leaves with you tomorrow morning for Dar-es-Salaam, but—he is never to arrive there. I give him to you. You may do what you like with him, but never let me see him again. You have my protection. Understand?"

"*Bwana!*"

The rubber lips pouted in the emphatic utterance.

"These are your secret orders. But you are not to tell them to any man, woman, or child here; you may tell your men when you are gone. If you disobey I will cut out your tongue and give you three hundred lashes. Understand?"

"*Bwana!*"

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"This man is the enemy of the Bwana Mkubwa. His enemies are your enemies. His goods are yours. Begone!"

The big black hand came up jerkily to the black forehead and shot away out and down; the polished calves moved like the eccentrics of an engine, and Corporal Inyira melted into the shadows.

"Sergeant Schultz!"

To the sound of smart heel-taps on the veranda entered the sergeant.

"You will see that Corporal Inyira and the escort leave before daybreak; moreover that he talks with no one before he leaves."

"Excellence."

"Take a drink, Sergeant."

With legs as stiff as his *sjambok* Sergeant Schultz obeyed the order; lifted the glass and drank.

"You may go! Good night, Sergeant."

"Excellence, good night."

As zu Pfeiffer shifted from the chair arm to the seat his movements were slightly erratic. He sat forward staring again at the photograph, as he drank more brandy. Outside the pæan of the frogs pulsed steadily; from a distance came the throb of a native drum. A cricket shrilled intermittently. Zu Pfeiffer sat and drank and stared.

Above the insectile anthem of the night rose a gurgling voice in a drinking song. Later came the crash of a breaking glass and an oath. The glimmer of three pairs of eyes through the window-screen disappeared and reappeared. Once more rose the voice singing:

"Scheiden tut weh,
Scheiden, ja scheiden, scheiden tut weh!"

Just as the cricket began anew, after having politely ceased to hear the lieutenant's song, there trickled out upon the clammy air the sound of weeping.

TO BE CONTINUED

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The Payment

by D. Wiggins

"GOOD mawnin', ma'am, can I get me a drink at your well?"

The question, spoken in a quiet but not exactly reassuring tone, startled the bent little figure in the poke bonnet and calico dress into sudden life. From the midst of a straggling flower-plot she gazed in dumb amazement at the suppliant, who from his saddle gazed at her inquiringly as his mount pawed the clay dust of the rutty hill road.

"Why, sure you may, mister," replied she, as her self-possession returned. "I didn't hear you drive up, and hit kind of startled me."

Turning, she pointed to where a spring bubbled from the shade of a grub oak.

"Thanks," was the brief answer, as the rider stiffly swung from his saddle and, opening the rustic gate, led his mare to the shade of the oak. Here he dipped up a gourd of the clear, cool water, and drank thirstily. Then, restraining the frantic efforts of the animal to reach the water, he carefully rubbed her dusty coat for several minutes with a wisp of dry grass. Not until her jerking at the reins ceased did he let her bury her muzzle in the spring.

"A chap as knows how to take care of a critter," was the unvoiced tribute of the sad-faced cripple who sat in the shade of the clay-chinked cabin near by. "He don't aim to let that purty critter get all swelled up on cold water when she's sweaty. He's the kind I like to see." And then aloud, "Come over and set in the shade a spell. Hits cooler here than in the road, and the day's a long time to go yet."

A swift glance up and down the rutty hill path showed the stranger that no one was in sight.

"All right," he assented.

Slightly loosening the cinch so the mare could move with more comfort, the weary one took a stool in the shade near the old man and fanned himself with the brim of his hat. The mare, who had followed him like a dog, her head never more than a yard from his elbow, cropped the sparse, dry grass near with relish.

"Stranger in these parts," guessed the old man shrewdly.

The better clothes, neatly cut, the broad-brimmed white hat, and especially the great Mexican spurs, all pointed to a man who did not live in the Ozarks. And the tips of the two long holsters protruding below the short coat were not a usual part of the attire of a denizen of that neighborhood. The long squirrel rifle was the favored weapon there.

"Come far?" inquired the old man, when he judged the newcomer had relaxed sufficiently to talk.

"Yes, a right smart ways," returned the other, "I'm just lookin' for a old friend of mine, Chet Bradford. I met him in Kansas a few years back, and want to tell him 'Hello' again."

The old man thought deeply a moment, then shook his head.

"I don't guess he lives around here, for I know everybody in ten miles each way. But he may live over on Turkey Crick or Jerdan Valley."

"Well, I'll just rest a little spell and then

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be gettin' on. It's near night, and I want to make the next town to stop over in." And the stranger looked at his watch, rose, and eased his heavy belt.

"No, no," protested the host. "You mustn't run off like this. We'd like to have you stay and eat a snack with us, and stay over till tomorrer. It's pretty lonesome here since I got lamed up like this, and there ain't much travel over this road anyway. Oh, maw," to his wife, "won't you hurry up a little supper? We're goin' to have this gentleman to eat with us."

"Why, I can't put you-all out this way," protested the guest. "I'll make a lot of extry work for the lady."

"Mister, if you ever got real lonesome you wouldn't say that," replied the old man. "We hain't got no near neighbors, and some one to talk to is a mighty relief to me and maw. So you jest put your hoss in the lot there by the branch, and we'll have supper in a jiffy."

"Well, if you're shore it ain't no trouble I'll stay," was the decision of the traveler, "but I got to sleep with my nag on the hay. You see, she picked up a stone about noon, and if I don't favor it a bit her foot will be awfully sore by mornin'."

"Well, if you must, but we got a nice bed in the house," assented the old man. "I'll get the table ready whilst you put your hoss up." Saying which, he picked up his crutches and hobbled for the door of the cabin.

As the stranger returned from liberating the mare, who strangely enough did not show any signs of lameness, he was apprized by his nose that a chicken was to form the basis of the meal. After a busy five minutes at the wash-basin and the cracked mirror that hung above it, he entered the cabin to find his host painfully engaged in laying a cloth over a small and rickety table, while the three dainty napkins draped over the back of a near-by chair showed that the occasion was one out of the ordinary.

The little old lady came from the tiny lean-to that was the kitchen with a steaming dish which could contain only a fresh corn pone, and soon the fried chicken was flanked by the pone and a dish of greens from the garden.

Three heads bowed in reverence as the white-haired paw offered a brief petition to the Giver of the food to bless the partakers thereof. Then the business of eating.

Those who have eaten the cooking of the Southland can appreciate the repast, the unfortunates who never get south of Cairo can only envy them the experience. No more need be said than that the meal was typical of the time and place.

As the meal progressed the darkness came, and the sad little hostess rose and placed on the worn table-cloth a tallow candle, standing in a beautifully carved candlestick. The stranger made no comment, but his eyes strayed from his companions to the article so obviously out of place. Soon the old man noted his glance, and explained.

"It's about the only thing we got left from the old home." His eyes dwelt on it fondly, and he seemed to be recalling a pleasant but rather painful memory. "We sold about everything we had when we moved down here, only that and a few little trinkets to remind us of the old homestead."

"You come here lately, then?" queried the guest.

It was the first question he had asked. Apparently he was not a curious soul.

"Yes, we just sold our old place in Breckenridge County four year since," replied the old man. "We come down here and bought this place right afterward." Turning to his wife he said, "Maw, is he the first man to eat with us since we come?"

A nod was the only reply; maw was apparently recalling scenes from the past too.

"As I said, since Jeffie——"

He stopped short in his remark with what sounded suspiciously like a choked sob. The stranger, sensing a tragedy behind the words, rose silently and strode to the door. The little old lady stood there, her eyes fixed upon the glory of the western heavens, but no sign signified that she saw them; tears rolled down her faded cheeks.

SOON the men were seated outside the door, and the scent of the fragrant tobacco that the little farm produced rose from the "Missouri meerschaum." The faint buzz of a mosquito sounded over them; otherwise the scene was one of deep peace.

Finally the old man broke the silence.

"We made things a little mite unpleasant for you at supper, I am afeard," he apologized.

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"Not at all—I never minded it a bit," returned the other. "I see you had a little sorrow somewhere, and I had some myself. We all got something we don't like to recall, I reckon."

"Yes, and in our case it was the boy's loss that done us up," returned the host. "You see, we couldn't stand it there where we'd see him grow from a baby to a man, and where we watched him ride away to enlist. We just had to get away or fall from grief."

"Your boy was in the Army, then?" questioned the man.

"Yes, he was under Quantrell, and a mighty bold rider, too. But after the fight at Lawrence we never could get a word from any of the boys what come back after the war was over. So we have give him up for dead, but his Maw's heart is plumb broke. He was the only one, you see."

"Well, I was with that bunch myself," slowly admitted the stranger, after several moments. "What did your boy look like, and how was he fixed. I might have knowed him."

"Why," returned the old man with a trace of pride, "he was tall and straight, with light hair and blue eyes, and generally laughin'. He rode a little buckskin pony he got from a Free-Stater, and he packed a bone-handled Colt navy. I give him the pistol the day he left; it was his uncle's and the captain brought it back to us after Cal was killed at the fight at Monterey, in the Mexican War."

"No, I don't reckon I knowed him," was the answer, "but you see there was nigh on to two hundred of us, and I might have seen him every day and not took no notice of him."

"Well, I reckon he's gone," said the father slowly." It's the Lord's will, but it's awful hard for us to bear."

And his eyes became misty in the dusk.

The subject was getting rather unpleasant for the stranger, so he knocked the ashes from his pipe and made as if to rise.

"I must turn in," said he, "I have a long ride ahead of me, and will start afore daybreak, if I wake up in time. So I'm afraid I won't get to see you no more till I come past the next time."

"No, no," protested the old man quickly. We'll get you a snack for breakfast and a lunch to take along. Besides, you won't find us here when you come again."

"Why, are you goin' home?" asked the stranger with interest.

"Hardly. We're going to the county farm," returned the old man wearily.

He seemed to droop as he spoke. The old buoyancy seemed to fall from him like a cloak, and a hopeless look crept into his sad old eyes.

"Why, you got a nice place here. Shorely you don't want to go on the county when you got your own home."

"That's just the reason we're going," returned the old man hopelessly. "We got a mortgage of two hundred dollars and two years' back int'rest on it, and we can't pay, no how. 'Buck' Briscoe, the feller what holds it, sent us word last week that he'd be here tomorrow with a notice to pay up or git off. So we've gone and told the poormaster to come and git us the day after tomorrow."

The speaker's face was white, but his head was high. Misfortune might stagger, but could not crush him.

"Now, that's tough. Can't you get him to give you more time to get some money ahead?"

"It's no use. I got lamed up in a runaway, so I won't ever be able to do no more hard work. I just as well be ca'm and go ahead. It's maw I felt the worst over. Her pore old heart's about broke."

For a few seconds the stranger took thought. Then he remarked:

"Perhaps you might get some help from somewhere. I wouldn't be too easy broke up over it."

"Thank you just the same, but I don't guess it's any use. We just got to take it as it comes here. I 'spose it's the Lord's will. Good night. I hope you won't leave without tellin' us good-by."

"Sure not. Good night," was the reply as the stranger turned toward the little log stable.

The mare welcomed her master with a low whinnying, but he did not respond with the accustomed caress. Instead, he sat long in the stable door, with his eyes fixed upon the rising moon, as his hostess had gazed unseeing at the clouds at sunset.

Finally he drew from an inner pocket a sheaf of green and yellow papers, with a curious brown stain upon several of the outer ones. The paper in which they were bound bore the name of a bank in a Kansas town. He seemed to take deep thought

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for a while, then with a smile he drew out a bit of paper and the stub of a pencil and began laboriously to rule some lines.

And in the house an old couple sobbed on each other's shoulders, while they held a faded tintype of a solemn little toddler with a wealth of curly hair and a rolypoly puppy clasped in his arms. And in the little box where the picture had been lay a tiny shoe and a broken-bladed Barlow knife.

SOON the moon looked down on a scene of peace. In the cabin the old people dreamed of the old home, and the lost one as he had been in the long ago. And in the stable upon a pile of hay and saddle-blankets the stranger tossed fitfully.

For in his dreams there rose the face of one whom he had forgotten for years. Once more he lay, caught by the fall of his dying horse, and the raging Free-Staters were rushing on him one more. And as he shook his empty six-shooters at them a golden-haired boy on a buckskin pony came on the gallop, wrenched him from his saddle, and bore him back to Quantrell's retreating ranks across a saddle bow.

And once more he seemed to hear the gasping breath as the boy writhed in agony from the Sharps bullet that caught him in the throat at long range that night. And a little mound on the prairie loomed in his dreams, for the boy slept there, far from his home.

The first twittering of the birds woke him, and after a hasty survey of the surroundings he stole swiftly and with care to the house.

An hour later a faded little old woman was crying from joy, and asking questions that a crippled little old man was unable to answer.

"Paw, ain't there some mistake? Are you sure you got it all right? Read that note again, I can't believe it's true."

"Yes, maw, there ain't no mistake. He says:

"Jeffie was my friend. Here is money to pay your mortgage, and keep you your lifetime. I ain't all bad, like some folks says. I hope you are well. Jes Howard."

"And that's all except the two hanks of bills. A hull three thousand dollars, too."

"Paw, it's the Lord's doin'. Keep still till I thank Him." And they did, with a deep fervor.

So it came that Mr. Briscoe was greatly surprized when he was told to take the little farm, and was assured that the money that was shown him was to restore the old home in the far-off Breckenridge County. He was unable to imagine any way for his debtors to acquire that sum. He was pondering deeply over it as he left, for his sole worry in the world was the fact that he did not own all the money in it.

THREE hours later the sheriff looked over his desk at a raging man, one who would listen to nothing but a speedy and armed posse taking up a trail.

"Right over the branch it was he stopped me," he wailed. "He pointed a pistol at me, and made me give him every cent I'd just raised on a note, and all my loose change. And then he said something about payin' a debt, and rode off like the devil was after him. Why don't you start right after him? He ain't got far."

"Got any idea who he was?" asked the head deputy, who had come in during the recital.

"No, I ain't, but he was a big, black-bearded feller, and had a horse that follered him like a dog. Never got more'n a yard from his back."

"This look anything like him?" asked the sheriff, as he extended a poster which he pulled from his pocket.

"Why, that's him. Who is it? I forgot my glasses," came the indignant query from the despoiled one.

"Why," returned the deputy, "no one special; just old Jesse James."

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Bad Men of the Old Frontier

The Jesse James Gang

BY E. A. BRININSTOOL

THE desperado who is known far and wide as "King of American Outlaws" was Jesse James, "the Terror of Missouri." Associated with him in his career of crime was his brother Frank, together with Jim Cole and Bob Younger. To the generation who lived through the '70s and '80s the name of Jesse James was synonymous for everything bad. He has probably been made the hero of more dime novels than any of the bad men of the old frontier—or, for that matter, all of the rest put together.

Jesse James was born in Clay County, Missouri, in 1849. Frank, four years his senior, was born in Scott County, Kentucky. "Frank James was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1845," says one history of the James Gang. However, I believe it ought to be 1841 as in another history of their lives it is stated, "In 1841 Rev. Robert James with his wife and their young son, Frank, then an infant, etc." In Emerson Hough's "The Story of the Outlaw" it is stated, "Frank James was born in Scott County, Kentucky, in 1846." Hough says Jesse was born in 1850. The New York *Times* in a telegraph dispatch of Frank James' death on February 18, 1915, says he was seventy-four at death, which would make him born in 1841. So here we have a variety of dates, no two of which agree.

Their father was a Baptist minister who emigrated beyond the Rockies when the boys were small, and died there. At the outbreak of the Civil War the James brothers joined Quantrill's notorious guerrilla band. This gang of four hundred and forty-eight men, with whom the Younger brothers, and probably the James boys, were affiliated at the time, sacked and burned the town of Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863, murdering—estimates vary—between one hundred and forty-three and two hundred and sixteen persons.

It would require a thousand-page volume to adequately set forth a list of the crimes committed by the James and Younger Gang. After the close of the Civil War the Quantrill band drifted apart, and the James and Younger factions began a career of murder and outlawry which the United States has never known before or since. Their depredations began in Kentucky. Pinkerton detectives tried in vain to capture them, but they were too keen to be caught napping. Some of the crimes committed are as follows:

In December, 1869, a bank at Gallatin, Missouri, was relieved of a few hundred dollars and the cashier murdered by Jesse James. In June, 1871, the county treasurer's office at Corydon, Iowa, was held up and fifteen thousand dollars were stolen. In September, 1872, at the Kansas City Fair, in broad daylight, and with thousands of spectators about, the secretary's assistant, *en route* to the bank with ten thousand dollars in cash, was relieved of his burden. In July, 1873, a Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific train was stopped near Adair, Iowa, and about three thousand dollars realized. In this hold-up the train was ditched, the engineer killed and numerous passengers seriously injured.

A Pinkerton detective named Witcher, who set about to capture the James boys, was apprehended by Jesse James and two of his gang. Witcher was bound, taken across the river into Jackson County, Missouri, and shot dead by Jesse.

In 1875 a posse surrounded the house of Jesse James' mother, Mrs. Samuels, fired the house and threw a bomb in at the window, under the impression that Jesse and Frank were inside. Mrs. Samuels' arm was torn from her body and her eight-year-old son Archie, by her second husband, was killed. This despicable act sent a wave of sympathy toward the bandits, even though rewards aggregating thousands of dollars were on their heads. Jesse and Frank James swore eternal vengeance for this crime.

Space forbids further mention of the numerous robberies and murders of this notorious outlaw band, save their final one —the raid on the Northfield, Minnesota,

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bank. In this last drama the actors were Jesse and Frank James, Cole, Jim and Bob Younger, Bill Chadwell, Charley Pitts and Clell Miller. When the gang held up the bank officials, the latter explained that the time-lock of the safe was not yet off. A quarrel and scuffle followed, in which Clerk Bunker was shot in the shoulder. The gang hastily grabbed what cash there was in sight, and as they left the bank Charley Pitts shot and killed Cashier Heywards.

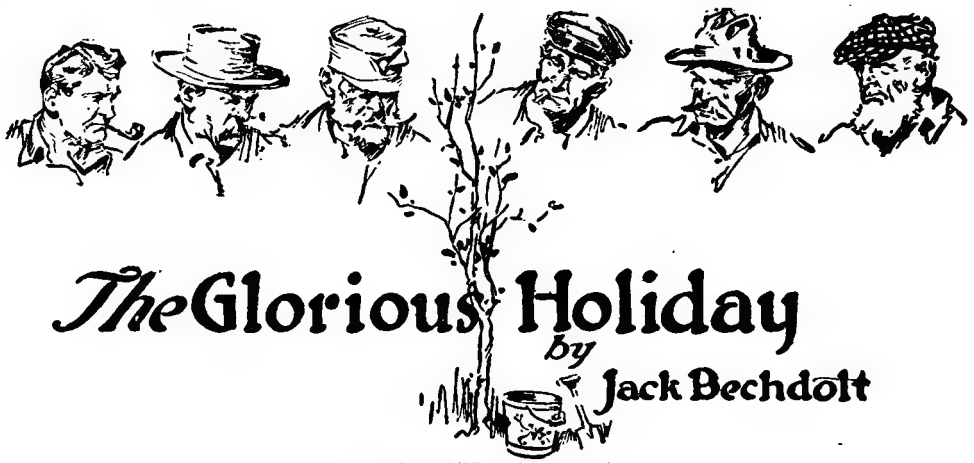
Citizens gathered, and as the bandits emerged, Miller and Chadwell were shot dead. All the Youngers were badly wounded, but got to their horses and escaped into the brush. Here the James boys left the others and escaped into Mexico. A few days later the other outlaws were captured, and Pitts was killed.

The Youngers were tried, pleaded guilty to murder and were sentenced to life imprisonment in Stillwater penitentiary. Here, in 1889, Bob Younger died of consumption. Cole and Jim, having been model prisoners, were pardoned in 1901. Soon after, Jim Younger committed suicide. Cole Younger has, I believe, died within the last two or three years. In 1915 he was living at Lee's Summit, Missouri.

The James boys remained in hiding for some time after the Northfield affair, but three years later again turned up in Missouri at their old tricks, confining their depredations principally to train hold-ups. So bold and audacious did they become that a reward of thirty thousand dollars, dead or alive, was offered for their capture.

One Bob Ford, a cousin of Jesse James, entered into a compact with Governor Crittenden of Missouri to rid the country of Jesse James. He won the latter's confidence, and on April 3, 1882, shot and killed Jesse while the latter stood unarmed on a chair dusting a picture, with his back to Ford. Ford was convicted of murder, but was pardoned by the governor the day following his sentence to be hanged. He was subsequently shot and killed in Creede, Colorado.

Frank James, the last of the outlaw band, surrendered to Governor Crittenden in October, 1882. He was tried on a murder charge, but nobody was found who could identify him, as the James boys habitually wore masks in their raids. After some time the bandit was given his freedom. In 1885 he married the daughter of a highly respected Missouri farmer, and always led an exemplary life thereafter. Frank James died of apoplexy at his farm near Excelsior Springs, Missouri, February 18, 1915, aged seventy-four years.



The Glorious Holiday

by Jack Bechdolt

Author of "Last Man Out."

SPEAKING of those days before the Pacific Northwest States went bone dry; before enlightened corporations built model bunk-houses with hot and cold water; before circulating libraries that penetrate even to the big timber, there were two red-letter events in the logger's year—Christmas and the Fourth of July.

Christmas season had passed into dim memories of headaches and black eyes; the Fourth of July was far, far away in the

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future. A dreary succession of gray, wet days of monotonous hard work had intervened between the one and promised before the other of these happy calendar anniversaries, and two score men of the Morris Logging Company outfit at Nisqually Lake were drenched in gloom as thoroughly as the land was drenched in rain.

To aggravate the situation there was a vague sense of Spring in the air, a feel which stirred men's blood and made them irritable. From Bart Mackee, the pugnacious boss, to Ethelbert, the mild-mannered cook, Nisqually Camp had been bored to a point where it ached for a fight.

And not one, but two fights impended.

For one, Dave Thor, the red-haired, freckled, five-foot-seven donkey-engine man had decided to lick the man he hoped to make his father-in-law. Bart Mackee, the boss and father of Dave's Nora, stood six-feet-three of solid bone and gristle, black-browed with a cold, gray eye, commanding nose and pugnacious chin. Big as Bart was, wiry, quick-witted Dave was a fair match for him.

Ordinarily Dave was no more irritable than is consistent with fiery red hair and a freckled disposition. He liked Bart Mackee at least well enough to be willing to accept him as a father-in-law. But worry about Nora and the everlasting monotony of rain, mud, and work, work, work at top speed under Mackee's driving had told on his nerves. Nor had this condition sweetened Bart Mackee.

Dave began with what diplomacy he could command.

"Looky here, Bart!" he burst out, very red of face, interrupting one of their endless cribbage games in the company office. "You know Nora?"

Bart's mouth dropped open. Know Nora? Certainly he had some claim to acquaintance with the nineteen-year-old daughter whose clothes cost him a pretty penny; whose schooling at a Portland establishment for select young ladies had cost him a prettier penny; whose every pretty, capricious way had wound another tentacle about his proud, fatherly heart.

"What about Nora?" he rumbled.

"Well," stammered Dave, diplomatic to the top notch of his ability, "I want to marry her. That all right?"

"No," growled Bart, "it ain't."

"Why?" Dave was furiously red.

"Because I say it ain't, that's why. If I'd 've known you was going to get that idea into your head I wouldn't never let you meet Nora last Christmas. No, Dave, forget Nora and play out your hand."

"I asked you why," Dave insisted, his blue eyes flashing.

"Don't make me tell you," warned Bart.

"Say, look here, Bart; what d'you mean?"

"If you got to know, Nora ain't going to marry no logger while I've got anything to say about it."

"So I ain't good enough, hey?"

"I didn't say you weren't good enough," roared Bart. "I said my Nora isn't going to marry no logger and I meant it. Nora's mother knows to her sorrow what it is to marry a logger. A camp's no place to keep a wife and living in town she's no better off than if she's a widow. Why, I'd rather see my little girl dead than tied up to some rough-neck logger for life."

"So that's it," yelled Dave, upsetting the cribbage-board. "I'm a rough-neck? I'm good enough to play crib with, but I ain't fit to associate with your family. As for being a logger, let me tell you, Bart Mackee——"

Dave did not have a chance to tell Bart Mackee anything. The boss was on his feet.

"Get out of here!" he ordered. "Outside and stay out until you get some sense into that red head of yours. Don't let me hear no more about this Nora business or I'll bust your head open with a peavey—you hear me? Find the other side of that door, Dave, and leave my family alone, or——"

The thunderous concussion of the door answered him. There was no cribbage game for a week and Dave, brooding over the insult, reached a madness that thirsted for a fight.

THE other event had its inception some weeks previous to the night of the cribbage game—it began in the private office of Lon Sayles, president of the Skyline Mills, Inc. In the course of his survey of business prospects, Sayles had been reminded that the Skyline Mills had contracted with the Morris Logging Company for three years' supply of fir timber, a very considerable amount.

That contract had been signed when logs were costing a third more than the present market price. There was every indication that in the year and a half the contract had

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to run the price of logs would drop still lower. In other words Lon Sayles saw where the Skyline Mills could save at least ten thousand dollars if his contract with old man Bill Morris were broken.

That was why Sayles sent for "Blacky" Macdonald.

Across his rosewood desk Sayles studied Macdonald, the handsome, dark, husky labor agitator.

"They tell me you can handle men," he mused.

Macdonald smiled assurance.

"I guess I can!" he admitted. "Say, did they tell you how I busted up that Red Star outfit down in Cowlitz?"

"That's all right," Sayles waved a cigar box toward his visitor. "Smoke up. I've heard all about you, Macdonald, but I'm from Kansas City—and you know what State that's in. This job I'm sending you on is going to take a lot more sense than the raw stuff you pulled in Cowlitz. There is a certain camp I want to see tied up tight as charity for at least two weeks, and I'll give you a bonus of twenty-five dollars a day for every day after that the job is idle. Now, listen to me."

NOT long after this interview a faller quit the Morris outfitun expectedly and Blacky Macdonald took his place.

Old man Morris brought up the subject of Macdonald with Bart Mackee several weeks later.

"Fire him," he advised. "From what I hear he's a labor agitator. He's a low-down bum and no good. Kick him out, Bart, before he makes trouble with the men."

Bart Mackee shook his head.

"Leave him be," he advised. "Any trouble he makes I can handle."

"Maybe you can," admitted old man Morris, "but we can't run the risk of delaying the cut. You know as well as I how we stand on that Skyline contract. We can just keep up with what they ordered and Sayles' lawyer put a stinger in there about 'time being the essence of this contract' and so on. Don't you think for a minute, with the price of logs where it is, that Lon Sayles ain't laying to catch me short, if he can, and take that paper into court and bust it. That clawed-up old bobcat don't overlook any bets, Bart!"

"No, leave him be," Mackee advised stubbornly. "No Blacky Macdonald living is going to worry me. Let him start something, if he can—I'd welcome it. Life gets too —— dull here in the Winter."

"Look out it don't get too lively then," warned Morris. "However it's up to you, Bart. You're bossing this job, but remember if that contract goes bust, you bust too."

Bart Mackee had bossed camps too many years to worry about such a possibility.

Blacky Macdonald was a skilled workman and willing, and the camp boss soon forgot him in other worries, chief of which was the eternal struggle to cut enough timber to satisfy the terms of Lon Sayles' contract.

But Macdonald did not forget his real job, the job for which Sayles had offered generous payment.

He had a positive genius for this sort of crookedness. He began by making friends, not difficult for a man of his attractive personality and persuasive ways. To reenforce personality he made a secret arrangement with the fireman of the light logging-engine that toiled the twenty miles between Morrisport and the camp several times a week, by which he purchased generous flasks of whisky—a godsend to men as far from a holiday as the gang at Nisqually.

Macdonald was full of lively reminiscences of his recent holidays in town and his subtle harping on the subject provoked a plague of similar yarns from the camp. A longing took root in the hearts of listeners and narrators, a longing born of evenings of card-playing and grumbling that intruded during the day's work and set men to considering the hard life of a logger twenty miles from town and three months from the Fourth of July.

When he judged the time ripe, Macdonald put a point to the haphazard restlessness. He interrupted a rambling discussion of holidays with a snort of impatience.

"Holidays," he sneered. "What do you know of holidays here? Christmas and the Fourth, that's all old man Morris gives us. Why, I'll bet we don't even get a day off on —now—Arbor Day."

Arbor Day was a holiday born in Macdonald's mind in a flash of inspiration. He was barely aware there was such a day, connected in some way with his public school period.

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Arbor Day!

There was a mute interchange of astonished glances.

"Say, Blacky," one ventured, "what is this here Arbor Day?"

"I thought as much," sneered Macdonald. "You never even heard about it. Well, you are a simple, innocent gang, now ain't you."

"Yes, but what's it all about?"

"Well, it's the day everybody in the State plants a tree."

"Plants a tree!" There was a hoot of derisive laughter. "Come off, forget it—quit hitting the pipe!" scoffed the bunkhouse. "Sacred matrimony, what'd anybody want to plant a tree for?"

"That shows how wise you all are," Macdonald retorted savagely. "Arbor Day is for the special benefit of loggers, and people plant trees so's there'll be trees to cut down after you squareheads have finished up what's standing. Oh, no, you never thought of that, did you? Well, what's more, every camp in this State, except maybe this one, is going to close down for Arbor Day. But you thick-skulled innocents, you don't deserve to celebrate it."

"Never heard of that before," objected a practical man.

"Of course you never because the State Legislature just passed the law this year," Macdonald lied. "But it's nothing to me. I'd as lief work as not—only I hope you don't say I never told you."

"Say, when is this here Arbor Day?"

"Next Thursday. Now shut up and leave me play out my hand here."

But they did not shut up. Blacky Macdonald's astonishing fiction was discussed from every angle. Astonishment gave way to indignation that the news of a logger's holiday had been concealed from the camp. If a few had some doubts as to Macdonald's veracity, they forgot them before the evening ended in the general desire to complain about something. There was a universal demand that something be done toward securing their rights. Tuesday a delegation headed by Macdonald called on Bart Mackee and presented a formal petition.

When the nature of the supposed holiday was explained to the boss, Mackee thrust forward an angry, red face and shook his broad fist menacingly.

"So you want to get off to plant some trees," he rumbled. "Listen to me—what tree-planting is to be done around here, I'll do—and I promise right now to plant a tree on the grave of the first son of a cockroach in this crowd that starts to celebrate this here Arbor Day. Now get to Sam Hill out'n here and remember, if any man in this camp goes to town before the Fourth of July, he'll go in a basket, looking like one of these here picture puzzles."

The delegation left sullenly and Bart Mackee telephoned to old man Morris not to send out the logging engine until the first of next week. He was taking no chances on his crew doing anything impetuous.

"I guess none of 'em feel strong enough to leg it twenty miles to town to plant trees," he surmised.

WEDNESDAY passed quietly. The crew, to a man, showed up for work. Mackee decided the Arbor Day madness had died at birth.

Wednesday night Dave Thor definitely decided to "pound some sense into Bart Mackee's head." His anger at Nora's father had grown to a passion as white-hot almost as his love for Nora's father's daughter.

Dave found Mackee in the little office. He had avoided him of evenings since their angry interview. Apparently Mackee had forgotten all about that.

"Hello, Dave!" he greeted. "Come back for more crib?"

"I did not! I come back to punch your fat face for you, Bart Mackee. You called me a rough-neck."

"Oh, ho!" crowed Mackee happily. "So that's it? Well, I just been aching to have somebody try to punch my head, Dave, ever since this Arbor Day madness. I called you a rough-neck, eh? Well you're worse than that, you're a freckle-face, lop-eared, red-headed——"

"Come out o' that—back to the woods," ordered Dave tonelessly.

Without more words the pair adjourned to the woods behind the cook-house. Night had fallen, raw with the eternal rain of Winter. Only the glow from the cook-house windows lit their slippery arena of mud.

Mackee and Dave tossed their heavy mackinaws to one side with businesslike directness. Crouching, they circled slowly, hard fists ready.

Mackee feinted and charged headlong

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for his shorter opponent. As he came he launched a blow sufficient to split a fir log.

Dave sprang lightly aside and let drive his own fist. It met the boss's cheek with a satisfying smack. Mackee roared and whirled on him.

The roar was answered by a chorus of yells that split the quiet. It came from the direction of the railroad track, near the bunk-house. The fighters paused in a truce of astonishment.

Somebody was thrashing toward them through the brush and mud. It proved to be Ethelbert, the camp cook.

Ethelbert was yelling as he came:

"Mr. Mackee! Mr. Mackee!"

"Here," the boss answered.

"They grabbed that empty flat-car that was down by the bunk-house," Ethelbert stammered. "The whole bunch of 'em. They're plumb crazy. Say they're going into town for this here Arbor Day. Got the car started on to the grade with poles and peaveys and they reckon to coast all the way. They——"

"Great grief!" yelled Mackee. "They'll do it, too, if I don't stop 'em. That's Macdonald's scheme—only one that's got head enough. The whole gang, you say? Suffering Moses, that'll tie up this camp. Come on, Dave!"

He started at a floundering run.

"No, no! Not that way!" shouted Dave at his side, pulling angrily to check him. "Head 'em off. Down where the skid-road crosses the cut—surprize 'em."

They pounded off at a tangent, lashed by underbrush, tripping, slipping, panting, but saving their breath for speed.

Ethelbert floundered in their wake until he unexpectedly encountered a moss-covered log and lay quiet admiring a sky full of new constellations.

Dave's plan was simple. The logging road had been cut through a bank. Above, a skid-road crossed the right of way on a log bridge. The pair reached the bridge as the flat-car, now at enough momentum to carry it, rocked along the rails beneath. The car was crowded with the wild gang, already celebrating their freedom with derisive shouting and catcalls.

Dave and Mackee poised at the edge of the bridge until the forward end of the flat-car was beneath their feet. Then they launched themselves into the crowd below regardless of consequences.

They had the advantage of surprize attack. From a tangle of fallen men Mackee emerged on his feet.

"Come on, Dave!" he yelled. "Set that hand-brake."

He plowed a path through the huddled crew toward the brake at the rear of the car. Dave was close behind him.

The hand-brake was manned by Blacky Macdonald. Engineer of the expedition, he had taken the post of responsibility. In the brief moments Mackee had risen and started for him Macdonald recognized his foe and saw his object.

"It's the boss," he snarled. "That's the stiff says we don't get no holiday. Throw him off, boys. Get that red-headed donkey-man!"

The flat-car was used to haul logs from the camp to the log-chute several miles away, at which point they were spilled into salt water and made into rafts. It was lined on either side by heavy stakes set in iron sockets, designed to hold the load en route.

Macdonald pulled one of these stakes free and waved it in a circle of menace above his head. Inspired by his example every man near enough seized a stake of his own.

Mackee and Dave halted abruptly, faced by these weapons.

"Back to the front end!" yelled Dave. "Grab a club!"

Several who sprang forward to check the retreat went down before their rush.

They armed themselves and faced the crowd.

Even in the semi-clearing of logged land the dusk was thick with rain. The eye could discern forms and little more. One thing was in favor of the pair; they were together and every other head that showed was the head of a foe. Stakes whirling, they waited the attack.

"Rush 'em! Rush 'em! Knock 'em off!" bellowed Macdonald.

The mass surged forward uncertainly.

"You, Macdonald," warned Mackee, "stop this car before there's murder done."

His club whistled overhead.

From the mob a man lurched forward. Mackee swung for his head, diverted the blow with lightning quickness, and swept the heavy stake in an arc close to the car floor. A thud told of club meeting shin-bones, a yell of pain, and the man was down in a heap.

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The huddled crowd burst forward with a rush. Voices merged into one prolonged, savage yell of battle that drowned the roar of car wheels. Like a flash the gray half-light of the cleared land vanished as the rocketing carriage plunged into a stretch of track through virgin timber, a tunnel black as midnight, that swallowed every vestige of form and left only the clamorous wake tailed out behind it to beat in sound waves on the forest walls.

A COMET of wrath, the flat-car coasted through the woodland blackness and in the comet's heart raged pandemonium. Clubs and fists were flying. Calked boots drummed on the planking and bull voices were raised in battle-cry.

The transformation to Stygian night saved the lives of Dave and the camp boss.

With their enemies in sight the loggers would quickly have swept them from the car. But at the instant they were in the woods Dave snatched Mackee to one side, shouting advice in his ear as he maneuvered.

The rush drummed upon them and they struck from the flank. Stakes met flesh with telling impact, but before the howling victims could strike back the attackers were gone again, back a step, worming through the press of milling fighters and striking anew from another point.

There was no need for sight to tell them what was happening on that swaying platform. Friend was at the throat of friend and oaths in a dozen tongues and dialects spread the news. Keeping in touch, the pair in one minute worked enough mischief to last their opponents ten.

Old Charon, who ferries the souls across the Styx, never engineered a boat-load of such fighting lunacy as this flat-car of uproarious hate that plumbed the blackness of the big woods with the speed and racket of a falling star.

"Dave!" Mackee's hands felt for his ally. "Right behind me now," he growled in Dave's ear. "We'll make a try for that brake and Macdonald while they're busy killing each other. If they get out in the light again where they can find us—good night!"

Mackee leading they sought to worm their way around the edge of the mob.

But Macdonald was a man not without wits. He recognized his danger and his voice could be heard in commands.

"Back, you —— fools, come back! 'Round me, 'round me, d'you hear? Stand solid, don't let them—ugh. Stand solid by this brake."

Try as they would, Dave and Mackee were blocked by the solid bulk of struggling men. The first madness of battle was dying. A moment or two more and reason, heralded by Macdonald's shouts, would halt their fists until opportunity dawned to direct their vengeance.

The fighters were groping their way back —toward Macdonald. Dave and Mackee found themselves standing alone again, and alone they would soon be seen, for ahead, still distant but menacing to them, showed a narrow slit of gray light, the farther end of the standing timber. Toward that slit the flat-car coasted rapidly.

Most of the logging-railroad was downgrade, with here and there a comparatively level stretch. The car was entering one of these levels now, with enough momentum to carry it on, but more slowly.

Of a sudden Mackee found himself alone. A second before Dave had panted at his shoulder—now he had vanished. He could not have fallen, there had been no fight. For a second the big boss wondered if his ally had deserted. But that was not like Dave.

There was no time to reason it out. They were in the light again, such light as it was, and the gang had seen him. He braced himself and swung his club.

A knot of men started forward and from either side others moved to flank him.

The swinging club made them cautious in frontal attack, but alone he could not watch everywhere.

With a yell of triumph a stooping figure darted from the right. Mackee whirled 'round and the club laid his opponent low. From the left a man leaped with arms outspread, fair on his back.

The big boss staggered at the impact, writhing to work free from the bear-like embrace and face the foe. Now those in front rushed in for the kill.

From over the edge of the flat-car another fighter appeared. It was Dave, and he came aboard with a rush.

Dave's fist, over Mackee's shoulder, caught the man who clung to the boss squarely between the eyes. His arms loosed their grip and he went down with a crash. Shoulder to shoulder again the pair of them faced the charge.

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Dave was shouting close to Mackee's ear:

"Back up—back to the stakes and hang on to something—hang on for the love of heaven. The log-chute——"

Then Mackee understood. There was a stake close behind them. He hooked one arm tightly about it, swept the other about his nimble ally and met the first of the attackers with upraised boot that sent him grunting into the mob.

They clung to the stake at the extreme front of the car, safe from every side but that they faced, and their anxious ears listened to the song of the wheels on the rails, while they prayed for speed.

The car took a switch point with a shriek of steel against steel. It shot on to the siding that ended in the log-chute.

Where the siding met the shore of Puget Sound there was a cut bank about fifteen feet high. The chute consisted of a floor of logs set endwise and leaning at an acute angle against the low bluff. In order to dump timber to salt water the track above was tilted to an angle of almost forty-five degrees at the lip of this chute—and it ended in a bumper.

Mackee had scarcely time to lash out with his heavy boot into the mob—scarcely time to thrill at the quick wit that had prompted Dave to leap from the car, race for the switch, throw it and climb back again to fight beside him while the runaway carriage rumbled toward the log-chute.

Before the raging mob of Arbor Day celebrants had realized the purpose of Dave's maneuver the coach tilted sharply, higher and higher.

Feet slipped, men went down. A chorus of yells and howls, oaths, warnings, shrieks ended in one terrific crash. The flat-car had struck the bumper and with all the speed and almost as much uproar as a load of fir logs the mob went rolling and sliding down the incline and into salt, cold water. Of all the strikers only Macdonald, who had locked himself against the brake-wheel, remained.

Dave raced the length of the tilted car, unarmed. Macdonald sprang forward with his club, but close behind Dave charged Mackee.

The red-headed donkey-man dodged the swing of the big club. He launched himself for Macdonald's knees and brought him down with a crash.

Before either could rise, Mackee had them separated—had the agitator raised in his arms and launched headlong over the chute.

MACDONALD struck the icy flood with a tremendous splash. His coming was greeted with a chorus of dismay from below. The water was stippled with heads.

The tide at the foot of the chute was low and men could stand, neck-deep in the bitter chill of Puget Sound on a raw March night. Several scrambled on to the steeply sloping, slippery logs and clawed upward.

With yells of delight the pair above thrust with their clubs and slid them back into the bath.

The chorus of wrath had died abruptly. Here and there a voice was raised in entreaty. The choppy tide was flooding. Soon the men below would either swim or surrender. There was no hope of climbing the cut bank and no chance to climb the chute.

Mackee swung his club until it whistled and roared with joy.

"Come on up," he taunted. "Come on, you runts. Who's first? Who wants to plant another tree? You, Macdonald, come back here and show the lads how to celebrate Arbor Day! No? What's the matter with all you merrymakers?"

"Hey, listen!" pleaded a big faller. "Lemme up. I ain't anxious for no more holiday."

"Me, too."

"Same here."

"That's right, Boss, I'm through, honest I am!"

Surrender was general. The plea from below was syncopated by chattering teeth.

"No you don't," Mackee exulted. "You wanted a holiday. Now, by thunder, you got to enjoy yourselves. If tree-planting's getting too tame we'll make this a water carnival. Swim, boys. Have a good time everybody. Hey, you 'Shorty.' Look out Dave, there's Shorty trying to quit already. That's it, back you go, Shorty! For shame you can't enjoy yourself with the rest of the boys!"

Mackee bellowed cruel laughter.

"Dave," he panted, "got the makin's? Thanks."

With infinite leisure he composed a cigaret and Dave did likewise. Squatting gravely at the top of the chute they lighted the

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brown paper rolls with elaborate politeness from one match. Contemplatively they smoked and listened to the clamor from beneath.

Men who have been overboard off Baffin-Land claim that those waters are as Atlantic City to Puget Sound even in Summer. Most loggers swim with the grace of millstones and the rising tide was becoming an actual menace to the half-frozen mutineers.

Mackee finished his cigaret to the last possible drag.

"Well, Dave," he remarked heartily, "it is getting a bit chilly here. We ought to be going before we catch cold, eh? Any of you boys feel like coming home before Arbor Day's ended? Yes? Why, Dave, they all want to come!"

He towered at the edge of the chute, facing the drenched and miserable rebels.

"Now you've had your fun," he pronounced sentence, "you can come back to camp, but you got to bring this car back with you. Me and Dave'll be the passengers and see you don't loaf on the job. As for Macdonald, leave him swim back to Lon Sayles that sent him up here to make fools out of you. I guess none of us want him any more. Hey, boys?"

A shivering chatter voted aye unanimously to that question. One by one the dripping men climbed the slippery logs and limped to the flat-car, bending their shoulders to the grinding task. They had plenty of opportunity to dry off as they rolled the heavy burden up the rails, back to camp.

MACKEE and Dave watched the subdued insurrectionists as they trailed back to the bunk-house. Their movements betokened utter weariness. Some of them limped badly. There were numerous black eyes and bruised faces and others felt themselves tenderly as if suspicious of broken bones.

But their temper had changed. Sullenness was gone. There was no need to listen for chance remarks to understand that these men were different from the irritable crew that had demanded a holiday. They were satisfied.

Mackee understood his own kind.

"Look at 'em, Dave," he chuckled. "Not a fight in the lot. Not an unkind word. In two hours they got the same effect as if they'd had a week off for the Fourth—and every man dead sober and not out a cent of money. Lucky stiffs!"

The big boss slapped Dave affectionately across the shoulders.

"If it hadn't been for you thinking to jump off and throw that switch and give that gang a bath there wouldn't be a log moved in this camp for weeks," he congratulated. "We'd all have been looking for new jobs. I sure am grateful to you Dave——"

Dave wriggled aside.

"You're forgetting something, Mackee," he warned. "We ain't settled our affair yet."

"Fight again!" exclaimed Mackee. "Why, you little bobcat, ain't you had enough yet? Me, I'm all fed up—but I must be getting old, Dave. What was we fighting about, anyway? Whatever it is I'm sorry I done it."

"Am I good enough for Nora?" Dave demanded fiercely.

"I always said you was," Mackee insisted. "But I still maintain you got too much sense to be a logger."

"But, hang it all, I ain't a logger—not after this April!"

"You ain't?"

"No, I been trying to tell you that all along, but you wouldn't listen. I been studying mill machinery and I got a job with the Rainier Company as an expert, installing mill plants. I can buy a home in Seattle, or Tacoma, or any place for my wife.'

"Well, then," judged Mackee, "if Nora says it's all right——"

"Don't worry about her," Dave grinned. "I asked her long ago."

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Paying His Debt

by E. E. Harriman

Author of "A Quick Decision," "The Splitrock Mine," etc.

BILL CAMERON rode for the L-L, where he had first learned to ride a horse straight up and never pull leather. He had learned under the tutelege of Tom Ramsey and Tom was a taskmaster who required results. He brought the same exactions to bear upon his pupils in the art of riding that he put upon the men under his rule in their daily duties. Any task must be done right the first time trying, to win approval from Tom. Until a man could learn to do his work that way he was in Tom's estimation only an apprentice.

"You hain't got a danged bit more right to half do a job, so that some feller has to go back and do it over, than you have to swipe the wallet out'n the boss's pocket," he used to say. "Good work or ramble. This ain't no rest cure fer half-baked punchers."

Tom had been foreman for Locke & Lorey six years when Bill came wandering along and asked for a job. He looked the eighteen-year-old boy over carefully, approved of his looks, gave him the rule all the L-L punchers had to live by, "Good work or git," and told him where to bunk. Then he started in to make a real cow-punch out of the kid and, if you will believe Bill, it was some schooling.

By the end of the first year, old Tom admitted privately that Bill was a promising prospect. At the close of the second year he told old "Loose and Easy," so called from always having had the habit of instructing new ones to "ride 'em loose an' easy, boy," that if he had luck he would make a real puncher out'n Bill right soon.

Then the Spanish War rose on the horizon. Tom kissed Molly and the little girl good-by, gave a few parting words of advice to Jack Harvey, who took his place, and struck for the nearest enlistment office.

Two miles out from the chuck-house, Bill jingled up alongside Tom and nodded briefly.

"Where'n —— you think yer goin' now?" said Tom.

"Along o' you," said Bill and set his face toward the distant town.

He held it that way till they swung off in front of the tiny recruiting office, giving no heed to the anathemas of Tom and making only a few short answers to his arguments. Tom cussed him in good puncher talk, with a mixture of Mexican invective thrown in for spice. As he dropped the rein over his horse's head he faced Bill.

"Now I want to know what in —— you're tryin' to mix in this yer game fer, you danged frozen-faced pup puncher?" he demanded.

"Fer Uncle Sam," said Bill, calmly.

"Uncle Sam, ——! You never cared two hoots in —— fer Uncle Sam before. You're so danged careless-minded, I don't believe you knowed he was any relation afore. I can't be bothered with no thing like you, hangin' around an' botherin' me. Git out! Scat!"

Bill made no reply, but walked past Tom into the office and up to the desk,

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where he gave his name, age, and other particulars. He was through with the preliminaries before Tom had finished his monologue about kid punchers and had come inside. He quietly effaced himself in a corner and watched Tom go through his paces. Then he followed the ex-foreman outside and swung into the saddle.

It was characteristic of Tom that he made no mention of the bone of contention that had occupied their attention before. The deed was done. Now let the world wag. He had no notion of wasting any breath on a settled matter.

They fought in Cuba and never got a scratch. They went to Luzon and helped pacify the Moro for another year without a wound to the pair. Then they started in on a run of luck and accumulated, among their fellows, the reputation of more slight wounds and lucky escapes than any other pair in the troop. The troop began to keep a record of trivial hurts suffered by the pair and grew envious of the nice little vacations in hospital they achieved.

Tom lost two joints off the middle finger of his left hand, when a brass slug ricochetted off his rifle-barrel, and that was the most serious hurt of five he suffered. Bill had to lie up for two weeks on account of a bolo slash along the left arm above the elbow, and that was his worst hurt out of six.

Then they got into a little mix-up with the gugus among the cogon grass and a hidden native dropped a bullet in Bill, beneath breath and breakfast, and Bill flopped. He was just in the act of crossing a chance bare streak where he was plainly visible, and the natives rushed to secure his gun and belt. Perhaps they had some idea of taking Bill's head along, but Tom frustrated that. He came down to where Bill lay, with a yell of defiance, and he showed the boys in the troop how to work a Krag.

The natives were so close that he made no pretense of aiming. He just held the Krag in the easiest position and flipped the bolt and pulled the trigger till the magazine was empty. He made a bull's-eye with every shot, since his longest shot was a scant ten yards. Then he gripped the Krag by the muzzle and used it as a club.

He was bleeding in more places than he had whole fingers, when the boys charged and rescued him, but he was still cursing gugus freely. He crumpled, though, as soon as the boys reached him and the last native shirt-tail fluttered out of sight. This time there was no more going back to the line for either Bill or Tom. They were both invalided home and went straight back to the L-L.

Before they had been there long it developed that Tom was not fit for the riding any more. That last round of slashing had fixed him so that the jouncing in a saddle for half a day would knock him out for a week. With reluctance he gave up his position, sold what stock he owned and went to southern California to live.

There he bought a small farm among the foot-hills and began to raise small fruits and garden truck. To Molly and the kid that was ideal. They both took to the foot-hill life like a duck to a slug breakfast. The kid, whose other name was Marian was just past seven and absorbed California at every pore, till soon she had well nigh forgotten that old life on the range.

As for Bill, he stuck to the L-L because he knew nothing else and never dreamed of learning anything else. He made a complete recovery from his wound, since he was young, tough, and clean-blooded; but Tom was never very strong again.

FIFTEEN years went by, with Bill hearing from Tom on an average of twice a year, but never a meeting save one, when Bill met Tom on the streets of Phoenix one day at a sort of cattlemen's reunion. They had a day and a night together, and then Tom went back to the foot-hill ranch and Bill to the range. When the full fifteen years had passed, however, Tom got to hankering for the kid puncher, as he always thought of Bill, and he wrote a letter.

It was couched in the simple language that was all he knew, when he was not cussing, and it carried a pathos that Bill felt, even though he did not give it that name. In fact his language about the letter was such as would indicate to a man unfamiliar with puncher ways, a hardened heart toward Tom.

"——! The —— old longhorn is just achin' to bust the wire an' to rangin' off to —— and gone. I'll have to go freshen up the brand on 'im."

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What Bill said to the new foreman was:

"I'm leavin' ye in the mornin' fer a month. I'm callin' on Tom Ramsey."

Accustomed to the vagaries of punchers the foreman merely nodded, and went on with his duties. Bill pulled out next day and made the west-bound overland at the station fourteen miles south. His horse he left there with a friend till his return.

Tom's ranch lay two miles from one of the little towns that so thickly spatter the valley east of Los Angeles. Bill found the best means of transport from town to ranch to be a little flivver bus that ran on a half-hour schedule up past Tom's place and into the mouth of a popular cañon resort. Toting his war-bag, Bill came up the walk to Tom's house and paused to take it all in.

It was a neat place; rose-covered bungalow, brick walks, flower-beds, flowering shrubs, shade-trees and lawn. Back and to the east side he could see the well-tilled acres of orchard and truck-patch. It made Bill have a queer little ache in one side, an ache of longing. He was not accustomed to homes like this.

As he lifted his war-bag again, a voice spoke to him from behind a rose-bush that billowed over a low, cross-armed post, falling into a perfect hemisphere of blooms. He turned quickly and saw a face, perfect in its healthy tan and color, peering at him past the bulge of the hemisphere. A few vagrant blooms rose above the curve and framed the face. Bill felt his breath grow short and his heart quicken. Instinctively, his hand went to his hat and swept it off. He did not speak, but his eyes did double duty.

"Did you wish to see my father?" said the voice, and a young lady came from behind the rose. "He is not at home just at present."

"Yes, ma'am. I did wish to see Tom, but it don't matter. I can come again, ma'am," said Bill, beginning to back toward the gate.

"Oh, I believe I know you now," said the girl. "You are Bill, are you not?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Bill, still retreating. "Bill Cameron, ma'am."

"Wait!" said the girl imperatively. "Don't keep edging toward that gate. You should know me. I'm Marian."

"Yes, ma'am. I suppose so, ma'am," said Bill, almost ready to stampede.

"Oh, then you must not go a step nearer that gate. Come right in and see mother. She will be glad to see you again after all these years. Come along."

Bill followed obediently and Marian led him up the steps, along a veranda that ran clear across two sides of the bungalow, and there she stepped aside that he might meet the little woman who was shelling peas at a little table. She rose so quickly that she sent the peas rolling on the floor, and her hand went out to Bill impulsively.

"Oh, Bill, it is so good to see you again! Never mind the peas. I will resign in Marian's favor and let her pick them up."

Bill had been staggered by the sight of Marian. Now he was near collapse at the sight of her mother. In his memory had lingered a vision of a timid, untutored woman, unbecomingly clad, with no knowledge of manner, other than that of puncherdom, devoted to her child and puncher husband, but uncouth.

He had thought of Marian as a child and here she was, a woman and a beautiful one. He had had in mind the mother as he knew her, untaught and ignorant, and here she stood beside him, a self-possessed and very attractive woman.

Something of what was passing in Bill's mind may have appeared plain to Molly Ramsey, for she flushed a little, but she was brave.

"You are surprized, Bill. I can see it plainly. You have been all this time thinking of me as an ignorant little piece, with no more knowledge of how to dress or how to act than I had fifteen years ago. You have been thinking of Marian as she was then. There have been more chances to grow in knowledge here than back in the cow country, Bill, and I have tried to keep up with my girl. That's all."

"Don't you believe it, Bill," said Marian, from where she was after the peas under the table. "She has kept a mile ahead of me all the way and I have to scramble now to keep within sight of her."

Bill looked down at her and Marian twinkled her eyes at him from under the table. She backed out and set the pan on the table. Her fingers flew as she shelled the big, fat peas and gave an ear to the conversation. A tongue, too, at times.

"There's dad," she said at last, and Bill turned to look down the road.

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A sturdy horse was plodding up the grade, drawing a spring wagon. On the seat sat Tom Ramsey, much the same as of old, though a little softened by age. Bill rose to his feet and walked out to the steps. He stood there, bareheaded, watching Tom and he could see that Tom was eying him inquiringly.

"Put your hat on," said Marian. "Perhaps he will know you better then. His eyes are not quite as good as they used to be."

Bill put on the wide-brimmed hat and as he did so seemed to get more confidence. He raised his voice in the old yell, and as its shrill *yippi-i-yay* rang out, old Tom rose up and laid the bud along his horse's back. That last hundred yards was made at a clattering pace and the horse turned in at the drive with the wagon on two wheels and Tom giving the answer to Bill's yell.

"You danged coyote! You young longhorn!" shouted Tom, leaping from the wagon to grip Bill's hand. "I hain't seen nothin' that looked so good to me since Hector was a pup."

THAT was how Bill Cameron came to the foot-hill ranch and the way he was welcomed. Followed days of helping Tom do his work, talking over old times all the while. Other days of riding with Marian on the winding roads of the foot-hill country and at times far up the cañons into the mountains. Bill found that Marian had ridden much and could sit a horse with any of them. He hired a pair, that they might ride often, and he surely made those horses earn their keep.

At times he rode down with Tom when he took a load of truck to the station for shipment. On one of these trips they met a scowling, scar-faced fellow, who glowered at Tom malignantly.

"Card-sharp, cheat, bunco artist, saloonkeeper, all-'round tough," said Tom, after they had passed. "Had it in fer me ever since I kept him from skinnin' a greenie. Hain't loved me any more since I forced him to shut his place, because there was too much criminal work hatchin' there. Swore he'd git me, but, shucks, he hain't a mite likely to try."

Bill thought differently, but he said nothing more. He had taken a dislike to that malignant face at once and felt that the fellow was one who would do anything vicious, if he stood a good chance of escape. Later he asked Tom the name of the crook.

"Jake Speigler. Came here from Arizona. From his talk he must have harbored around the Tonto Basin at some time. Seems to know the whole blamed State well enough to claim acquaintance with most of the bad ones, when he wanted to impress some fool."

Bill made mental note to remember Jake.

Day by day Bill was beginning to watch for his rides with Marian with more longing and delight. He knew he was falling in love with her and he reveled in it. He became so much in love that if he was talking with Tom or Molly he had one ear cocked all the time for Marian's voice or step. He knew he was doomed, but it never scared him a mite until a crowd of the city young folks came out one day.

They were some of the boys and girls that had gone to school with Marian in Los Angeles. For she had not only graduated from a city high school, but had taken a college course as well.

That day was the most unhappy in Bill's life. He had been living in a fool's paradise, he told himself, when he suddenly had it borne in on him that these young men were Marian's kind. He saw the gulf that lay between a cow-puncher and a city-educated girl like Marian.

Four days of brooding, making a brave effort to keep natural when Marian or Molly were around. Four nights of broken sleep, when he spent double the time in sorrowing, that he did in slumber. Then he packed his war-bag and asked Tom to take him down to the train. Tom protested, begging him to stay another week, but Bill refused.

"I gotta git back," he said. "I been gone three weeks an' four days now. Reckon got off fer a month."

At the last, Molly came
a flat packet in his ins
As she did so she looked i
the smile on her face faded
concern. She saw the unhap
there. She stood with her h
Bill's coat and scratched his face
eyes.

"You're not happy, Bill. S
has happened," she said. "I'm so
Bill. Don't let it master you, Bill.

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are some photos that I want you to take back with you and I hope they will help you keep happy. Don't forget that you have friends here always, Bill."

Bill choked and turned his head away. Then he looked back to her and his hands closed over hers.

"I'm a-goin' to do what I never done afore, Molly. Tom won't care."

He stooped and kissed her.

His parting with Marian was brief and gay, as he mustered all his grit to help him carry it off well. Then he went out to the rig in which Tom was to drive him to the station. As his train came in, he gripped Tom's hand with one firm clasp, swung aboard and waved back.

"So long, you old cuss! Don't get so almighty much in love with the fruit-farming that you will forget the range," he said.

"Well, Bill, don't you hide out among cactus and sage-brush till you forget the way out to the little old farm. We're lookin' for you at least twice a year after this. So long, you danged longhorn."

BILL built and mended fences, rode hard and far, tended sick cattle and skinned dead ones, busted broncos and nursed weak calves again as he had always done. A little over three months passed with no change from the usual routine and then "Chuck" Mitchell came riding in from the little cattle town, carrying a telegram from Molly for Bill. He tore it open and read, his face growing hard and set.

BILL CAMERON, L-L ranch, via Skull Valley, Arizona.
Tom murdered last night left message for you.
MOLLY.

Bill was half a mile from the bunk-house when he read the message. He stopped only long enough to speak one sentence to

...s in from the railroad and

...ith the words and Chuck
...ick up the crumpled paper
...n Bill off at top speed. He
...nderstood. He loped off for
...ation, watching for Bill.
...ill, he raced back to the bunk-
...cured what money he had there,
...on his belt-gun, threw on a coat
...ame out to his horse again at a run.

He leaped into the saddle and drove the rowels in. It was three miles to the station.

Chuck saw the west-bound train pull in and pull out again before he was very near. A running horse went past the station and out on the right of way at full speed. A figure leaned from the saddle to grip the guard rail, the horse turned down the embankment and went loping off across the plain. Chuck rode to catch it.

"He done did it, but I was afraid he'd lose out," he said to his horse and the atmosphere. "Movin'-pitcher stunt, but he hain't no choice, comin' in late thataway."

He started back to the ranch with Bill's horse fox-trotting along with his own, reading the telegram over again as he rode.

Bill found Molly calm, though the grief that was eating her heart showed in her eyes. Marian was weak from long crying, for she had always been her father's devoted lover. Molly was forcing herself to keep balanced and capable, as much for Marian as for all other reasons combined. They both welcomed Bill.

"How did it happen? Have you any idea who did it?" were the two questions that Bill asked, as he stood in the presence of the women in his puncher garb.

"It was done in the cañon back of our place," said Molly. "Tom went up to work on the intake of his irrigation system and did not return. Marian went to look for him with a lantern after it grew dark, and found him among the rocks, dead, with his shovel beside him and a stub of a pencil in his hand. The shovel is locked up in the court-house as evidence. Tom had written on its back, 'Jake Speigler did it. Tell Bill to git—' and then it trailed off into just a crooked line. Speigler disappeared just as soon as it was known that Tom had revived enough to scrawl a message."

Bill crumpled his hat in both hands and the grim lines around his eyes and mouth set strongly. He was picturing to himself that last effort of his friend to claim his help in bringing the wolf to justice for his crime. He spoke to the wall of the room and detailed that fight when Tom stood over him and fought a horde of savages.

"He never stopped to think of himself. He just sailed in and fit fer me like I was

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his kid brother. I've owed Tom fer that this long while and now I can't never pay in full, but I'm out to pay interest on the debt. I'll git Jake if I have to foller him plumb to ——."

Down in the little village they could tell him nothing about the missing Jake or the direction of his flight. The local constable, Henry Talbot, was a bright fellow and he liked Bill. He took Bill to one side and talked to him where none could hear.

"Belle Dunlop will know where Jake is, but she won't tell. He was sweet on her and she would go through fire for him. Wish I knew a way to make her spill what she knows, but I don't."

Bill thought a moment, then made a suggestion that brought sundry expressions of delight from Henry. Then Bill went over to the office of the little paper that came out that evening, had a little talk on business matters and paid a little coin. Then he and Henry met at the post-office and had another talk with the postmaster.

Belle Dunlop lived in a little bungalow about two blocks from the post-office. There was a rose hedge along the east side of her place. The delivery boy threw her paper on her lawn at five-thirty and she ran right out after it. She sat down on her porch to read the news and inside five minutes had begun to rip a section out of one column with a hairpin. Then she dropped the paper and went inside.

She came out again in a few minutes, her hat on and an envelope in her hand, and hurried right down to the post-office. She dropped the letter in the slide and passed on. The postmaster gathered up the letter to throw it in the bag and Henry Talbot looked over the low partition that shut the office off from the passageway to the back entrance. Then Henry scribbled in a note-book and went out to find Bill. He showed his book and Bill copied what Hen had written.

"I got her paper and ripped another to leave in its place," said Bill. "This is all I need now."

He heard the roar of the east-bound mail train as it rolled in and out again, while he talked.

"It's gone," he said. "When does the next one roll?"

"At eleven-fifty," said Hen. "A little over five hours behind this."

It was nearly noon when Bill stepped off the train in a little Arizona town. He walked directly to the post-office and sought the postmaster. He showed that individual a letter written by the local sheriff in the county where Tom had lived and died and asked a question.

"Did a mean-looking cuss, wearin' a scar that run from the corner of his left eye straight down to the bottom of his jaw, call here fer a letter this mornin' and give the name of John Meyer?"

"He sure did," was the reply. "He tore it open, cussed, and lit out. He dropped this when he started and I picked it up just outside the door, havin' a mite of curiosity to know what hit 'im."

He lifted a scrap of paper from his desk and showed it to Bill. It had been torn from a newspaper and Bill took the folded copy from his pocket. The scrap fitted it perfectly. Together they read it.

The friends of Tom Ramsey will be pleased to learn that his old partner and chum, Bill Cameron, has come from Arizona and will take the trail of Jake Speigler at once. Bill looks like a stayer and we feel sorry for Jake, as sorry as a decent man can feel for a brute like him. Bill will carry credentials from our local sheriff and will get others in Arizona. We suggest that Jake should be tried for his crime about a week after Bill has filled him full of lead.

"We calls him 'Shortcard Jack' out this-away," said the postmaster. "What's he did now?"

"Committed murder," said Bill. "Where did he stop around here?"

He found the place and he found the man who had let Jake have a saddle-horse. He learned that Jake had headed southeast, toward the Tonto Basin country. Within the half-hour Bill was in the saddle and following the same trail. All the rest of the day and far into the night he rode. He was up at the first streak of dawn and riding again. He bedded down on his saddle-blanket only an hour before midnight. Again he rode along the trail before the sun rose.

THAT afternoon he met a man in the trail, walking and leading a weary, sweat-stained horse, that limped heavily with his left foreleg. The man was furiously angry and when Bill stopped to speak to him broke out into red-hot Arizonian.

"—— —— — —— ——! Mebb

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thinks I don't know him, but I do and he can't set me afoot and git away with it. —— —— ——! I'll fix him for this, —— ——!"

"Shortcard Jack Meyer?" asked Bill.

"That's just who it was, but how'n —— did you know?" demanded the man with the horse. "You lookin' fer that cuss?"

Bill nodded and the man came close.

"Lookahere, stranger," he said. "I don't know you from Adam's ox, but any danged man that's after Jack Meyer with a gun on 'im is my friend. He got the drop on me and swiped my hawse and my gun. You keep right along this trail fer about seven mile and then strike off on the branch trail that starts beside a big rock that has a letter Y painted on it. Two mile along that branch you'll find my brother, Sam Young. I'm Dick. Tell Sam I said let ye have the Box Triangle bay hoss and then you go git Meyer. He robbed me not over two mile back. By now he's about six-seven mile ahead.

"Here's a tip fer ye. He's headin' fer his old stampin'-ground on t'other side of the ridge. He'll ride till midnight and hole up in amongst them old ruins this side the ridge, aimin' to light out by daybreak and git over the ridge. If he makes it over thar ye'll need help. It's doggoned hard pullin' a skunk out'n his hole. I aimed to go home and git a fresh hoss, roust out Sam and a few more and go after the cuss, but that'll take time. Git Sam to show ye the old Mormon trail and ye can head 'im off at the ridge. Here! Lookee!"

Swiftly the man drew a map in the dust. He banked it to show the ridges and cañons. He marked every branch trail and the water-holes. He showed how the old Mormon trail was the hypothenuse of a great triangle, connecting again with the main trail just over the ridge of mountains to the northeast. Then he drew an oblong to show the location of the biggest cliff-dwelling in the great cañon.

"He may hole up, likely will, and that is the best place. Here's the plan of the ruins."

Swiftly the plan grew there in the dust and Bill studied every line. He nodded when the stranger looked up. He would not forget a single line or angle of that plan.

"Thar's a old trail anglin' up the clift that you kin foller by feelin' with yer hands. Thar's a inner room with a raised bank at the left of the arch, whar he'll most likely spread his blankets. Go git 'im and git 'im good. Wisht I had a real hoss and my gun, so I could git in on this, but Sam will throw in with ye."

"Much obliged," said Bill, starting his horse.

He found Sam willing and eager as soon as he had told his story. He was on the bay horse and off again on the trail within fifteen minutes and had hard work to keep Sam from coming right along.

"I sure appreciate the offer, but this is a private matter with me," Bill said when Sam insisted.

Instantly the ranchman paused.

"Excuse me, stranger," he said. "I didn't know that."

"How long a trail is this Mormon one?" asked Bill.

"You kin make it to the intersection by two or two-thirty, if ye just let the bay have his head. He's been over that trail lots of times and will keep it night or day. Drop the rein on his neck and let him go, as soon as ye make the turn. He's the fastest walkin' hoss in these parts. Best Meyer can do by the other trail would be to hit the old ruins by midnight and mebbe not then. Depends on how good a horseman he is. Here's hopin' ye land him."

It was one-fifty-four by Bill's watch when he intersected the main trail and climbed off his horse to examine its surface by the light of burning matches. Not a fresh track on it anywhere and he rose to his feet with a sense of relief. He came back over the ridge and began to drop down the grade.

It was after three when he reached the clustered rocks that had been indicated on the dust map as marking the trail to the ruined cliff-dwelling. He led his horse deep into the brush and small trees, unsaddled and hobbled him. Then he slung his holster over to the front and went back to that branch trail. A little short of the cliff the soft flutter of nostrils, that marks an inquiring horse, led him off the trail a short distance. He found a sweat-stained horse standing there with hobbles on his ankles.

Sure that his man had holed up, Bill crept back to the trail again and felt his way to the cliff. Here he removed the vest that hung unbuttoned and open on his body, cut it in half and muffled his

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boots with the pieces. Then he started up the face of the cliff by the prehistoric trail that slanted this way and that on its face.

Bill's entrance to the ruin was soundless and he picked his way across to the arch that led to the inner room just as carefully. He slipped inside and stepped one pace to the left. His back was against the wall and his gun in his hand. No chance of his being shown in silhouette against the sky. He waited, tense and alert, for some sound to show the sleeper's location. A deep breath and sigh came to his ears, followed by the sound of an arm thrown over by a sleeper. He knew that Jake lay on the raised bank at his left.

One muffled foot went out and slowly, carefully, swept the dirt to remove any débris that might snap under pressure. Another slow step and a third. This time a tiny shard of old pottery lay beneath his heel and it snapped sharply as his weight came on it. Like the dart of a rock-lizard, Bill dropped to a squatting position, his left hand touching the dirt floor by its fingertips. The sleeper swung to a sitting posture and his voice sounded gratingly.

"I got ye! Hands up and don't move!"

BILL'S fingers touched another shard and lifted it silently, to send it noiselessly across the room. The tinkle of its fall was cut in half by a flash that streamed straight for the sound. Again the leap and stream of flame and the roar of a heavy discharge. A swift downstroke of Bill's gun, as he rose to his feet, knocked the other's gun spinning, and he gripped his man by the shoulder. The gun rose in a sweep for the outlaw's head, but a third shot belched and its fire burned Bill across the side. He changed the direction of his blow and the second gun followed the first.

As the gun left his hand, Jake threw himself suddenly backward and drew up his legs. He had freed his shoulder and both his feet caught Bill at the belt as he came over. Bill struck on his back on the floor and his elbow hit so hard that his gun flipped far behind him. He rolled to his feet, heard Jake sweeping the dirt with frantic fingers, in search for a gun, and threw himself on him. It was man to man, now, with nothing but hands and feet for it, and Bill could feel in his side the burn of powder and the sting of lead.

Clutching with one hand and striking with the other, he tried to send in his blows where they would be most effective. Jake used both hands and broke away. They came together again and clinched. Down on the floor, rolling in the dust of centuries, striking, clawing and gouging, they went at it as the builders of this dwelling had fought.

Over and over they rolled, the advantage constantly shifting. The thud of blows and the deep breathing, the scuffling sounds and the grunts of terrific exertion, the only break in the silence. Neither man spoke a word, till Jake twisted his neck and bit deeply into the arm that Bill had gripped with him. Then Bill spoke.

"You will, hey?"

A fist swung over in a downward blow and landed on Jake above the cheek-bone. His head flipped over and his teeth released their hold. Bill swarmed over him and tried to subdue him, but Jake tried worse tactics and Bill threw mercy to the winds. His hands went under Jake's armpits, curved over and clasped above his forehead. A heave and Jake cried out, turning his head over his shoulder involuntarily to relieve the pressure. Bill heaved again, his shoulders bunching with tense muscles and his back bowing upward. There was a crack, crunching, grinding, in its character. The breath went out of Jake's lungs with a queer whistling grunt and Bill slid off him.

He struck a match and set fire to the kerchief around his neck. By its light he collected the lost guns, gathered a few dead leaves and twigs that had blown in, and built a fire on the remains of the cloth. The blaze leaped and showed the bloody, haggard face of Bill. It shone on a strangely humped body that seemed headless.

Bill took hold of Jake and drew his head from beneath the shoulders, straightening the body decently. The head rolled loosely as though it were tied to the body by a rope. Then Bill undressed and bandaged a wound just above his hip-bone. The bullet had torn a gash as long as his hand and it was bleeding fast.

THE man, Sam, saw a swaying, haggard wreck, in clothes that were red from waist to ankle, come tracking in at the gate. He carried the nearly-bloodless figure inside and gave efficient

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first aid, while Bill mumbled and muttered in semi-delirium. When he and his wife had Bill safely stowed in a bed, Sam rode to the nearest place where he might send a telegram and sent a message Bill had gasped and mumbled out to him in his weakness.

MOLLY:
I got him right.
BILL.

But Sam added words of his own and Bill woke from a nap one day to find Molly bending over him and Marian on her knees beside his bed, kissing his skinned knuckles and crying over them.

"Don't! Don't do that!" he whispered weakly, trying to free his hand.

"If you won't let me kiss your hand, I'm going to kiss your face," Marian replied and her soft lips touched his cheek.

"Oh, my God!" said Bill. "Don't! I can't stand it! I love you so, I can't take it sensibly. It—it will make it all the harder when I am well and know I got to let some better feller have you."

Molly turned away and walked out of the room. An arm went up across the pillow and curved around the wounded man's neck.

"They don't make better men," said Marian. "You can't lose me. You put your road-brand on me long ago, Bill."

Bill gave one great gasp and his arms went 'round her shoulders.

TIRED

BY BERTON BRALEY

TIRED and weary and sick of work?
Most of the rest of the world is, too.
But if the tired ones all should shirk
Few indeed are the tasks we'd do.
To toil when lively and full of zest
Deserves no credit; the test of men
Is this—that, tired, and wanting rest,
They still go back to the job again.

It's fun to work when you're strong and fresh;
But to stick and stick when your strength is gone,
When you are weary in mind and flesh
And sick and tired of plodding on—
It's such a trial that proves your worth,
And shows your mettle and nerve and grit;
For folk who've builded and saved the earth
Are tired people who wouldn't quit.

The French were tired who held Verdun,
And that's their glory that gleams like flame.
Weary to death, they fought and won
A mighty battle, undying fame.
The tired mothers, the tired wives,
The weary workers, fatigued and spent,
Have struggled onward through tired lives—
And the work they have done is their monument!

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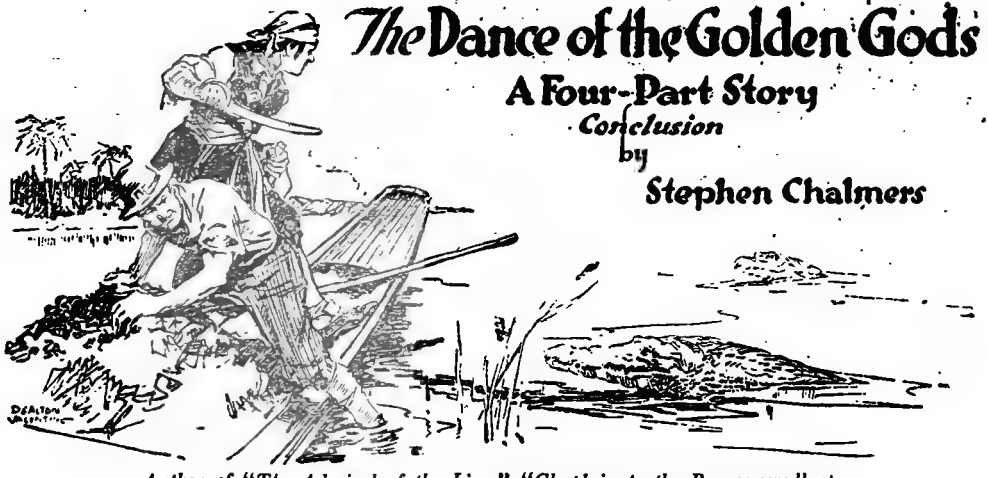

The Dance of the Golden Gods

A Four-Part Story

Conclusion

by

Stephen Chalmers

Author of "The Admiral of the Line," "Chaplain to the Buccaneers," etc.

CHAPTER XXI

A ROYAL GIFT

IT WAS forty-eight hours before Gorges and company awoke to a full realization of the fact that they had been indiscreet. It was indeed nearly two days before they recovered sufficiently from the debauch of the golden dance to be capable of sane reflection. While the aftermath of the festivities seemed not to affect the Orejones, or Incas, the sweet fiery liquor of the Orenoqueponi hung heavily upon the nerves and thinking faculties of the whites.

When Butshead came to his senses he found himself and his companions back in the quadrangular court of the guards' house. How they got there he could not guess, except that they had been carried, as so many inert bundles, and left to sleep off the fumes of their reckless libations.

Butshead at first thought he was merely resuming a strange nightmare when he discovered, instead of the familiar figures of the *Fearless* and the voyage up the river, a number of golden images lying prostrate around him. He himself was astonished at first to discover that he was naked except for a loin-cloth and that from head to foot he was painted with shining gold-dust.

Then memory threaded events together and the young mate lay back with a groan of disgust. Thereafter, as he slowly recovered, he suffered perhaps more than the others, for he had ever been respectful of liquor and refused a curative stimulant which Gorges and the others presently welcomed and even employed to the continuation of their intoxication, excepting Fergus, Sparrow and Godwin.

Tarupanoma and his men and the maidens again attended them and their wants. Butshead noted with curiosity and interest that the Orejone warriors appeared quite as if they had never shared in that strange orgy. It was as if they were possessed of some secret antidote, such as Taruma had described to Butshead aboard the *Fearless* that time the young prince doctored Captain Barbary.

Despite his sickness Butshead was the first to attempt self-resurrection from the slough into which he and his fellows had fallen, or plunged themselves. The golden sheen that covered his body was the first thing he tried to get rid of. He noticed that Tarupanoma and his men had freed themselves of the yellow gilding.

Through Sparrow he learned that the only way to remove the gaudy coating was to bathe the skin with the same alcoholic liquor which they had drunk. Sparrow, Godwin, Fergus and Butshead elected to be clean and Tarupanoma and his men brought a number of wooden bowls filled with the spirituous palm-brew.

While the four white men washed themselves with the spirituous stuff, then bathed in the pool, Gorges awoke and looked on stupidly. Learning the nature of the stuff that was being applied to remove the golden varnish he suddenly laughed and

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drank a goodly quantity of the spirit. In a few moments he was sufficiently revived to become again his reckless self. He took the liquor as a further example of the considerate hospitality of Guascar's people. He aroused his crony, Scroop, and that worthy also made a similar application of the palm-liquor, as did several of the others.

Presently the drunkards, their ill-feelings temporarily offset, lay down to sleep again, while Butshead, Fergus, Sparrow and Godwin, cleansed and more nearly in their right minds, sat with their heads in their hands, moody and remorseful. Tarupanoma and his men made no sign that would indicate their opinion of the white men's conduct, but Butshead felt that the latter was surely undermining the savages' good opinion.

With them, perhaps, the occasional debauch was almost a religious rite, but continued drinking for drinking's sake something strange and foreign. Nevertheless, they strictly observed hospitality, and the thirst of Gorges and his crew was never unquenched upon a hint.

On the second day after the dance of the golden gods Butshead and the three others who were observing temperate behavior were sufficiently recovered to consider matters in council together. Gorges, Scroop and the other five of the eleven were still half-drunk and showing no great desire to get sober in a hurry. They still wore their skin-tight suits of gilding and seemed to take a childish pride in their curious adornment.

"Hey, lad!" chuckled Gorges to Butshead. "We be the golden gods and so we will show ourselves in London Town."

The idea of startling the English metropolis by appearing there sheathed in yellow gold and with their strange tale of El Dorado appealed greatly to their crazy fancy.

"Aye, aye," muttered Fergus to his friends, "but London Town, I'm thinkin', is further off than ever and I'm wonderin' now how we are to get out of this El Dorado we were so keen to enter."

Butshead, Sparrow and Godwin shared misgivings on this point. As the days went past nothing occurred to foreshadow the upshot. They were not restricted to the building in which they had been lodged, at least not until Gorges and his fellows expressed a desire to go out into the town and find further entertainment. Then it was conveyed by Tarupanoma, through the interpreters, Sparrow and Godwin, that they could not do so until they had shed their golden paint.

The feast of the golden gods, Tarupanoma quietly explained, was a sacred rite of the people of El Dorado and to appear out of season in the decoration of that rite would be displeasing—to say the least—to Guascar and his people. Besides, the continued wearing of the golden mantle of honor was displeasing to the gods, who would surely visit them with sickness and death. It was then, and then only, that Gorges and his cronies agreed to rid themselves of their gorgeous covering and resume the Indian costumes which had been given them.

They were given the freedom of the town and for days they held high frolic in its streets. And here again their undisciplined conduct made for trouble. They were treated with the utmost courtesy, and wherever they went the native hospitality offered the native tipple.

Butshead, Fergus and Raleigh's hostages refused it, but Gorges and his cronies continued to drink and their protracted intoxication did nothing to increase the native respect for them. In fact, before the end of the week they spent in El Dorado their excesses and their actions growing out of it made it clear to Butshead that some disaster was due to happen if the whites did not conclude their business in Guascar's capital and begin their retreat.

It was Butshead, supported by Fergus, Sparrow and Godwin, who proposed retreat, while they wondered whether Guascar would accede to it as he had been gracious in all other things. It was Gorges, backed by his cronies, who objected to the proposition. It served, however, to sober them up somewhat.

"We came here for gold," declared Gorges, "and are we going to go back empty-handed? Here's gold—pure gold—in loads! What we got to consider is how we are to lay hands on it and get away."

Gold—pure gold—loads of it—there was. The dishes from which they ate, the vessels from which they drank, were made of it, but the four of the company who were capable of discretion strenuously opposed the mere suggestion of obtaining possession of even a pennyweight of it.

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"Our lives are not worth a farthing dip," said Godwin, "an we show that we hold it worth more than dross."

"A pity 'tis," said Butshead, "that we ever saw El Dorado or fell into the hands of the Orejones. Then we had the mountain, and by this time, 'spite our difficulties, we could ha' devised means of loading our boats and dropping down-stream to Taruma's town."

"Aye," said Gorges, "but there's a heap difference atween carrying eleven fortunes in pure gold plate and staggering back and forth between the mountain and the boats with loads of rock."

"It's our only chance of returning with anything for our pains," said Butshead, who then made the proposal that they pay their respects to Guascar and ask permission to return to the river.

WHILE they discussed this proposition it so happened that the old king, Guascar, was in conference with some of his elder chiefs as to what should be done with the white men.

Guascar might have known little or nothing of the English adventurers' doings in the town had not one of the elder chiefs—the same aged *acarewana* who had scowled upon the whites when they first landed from the lake—whispered much in the king's ear.

Guascar had been duly informed of the continued drunkenness of the Englishmen and also that on account of certain reckless exploits in the town the women of the Orejones, who had at first treated the whites with hospitable confidence, had come to fear them. At this news the king was both troubled and angered. He decided that the whites were outstaying their welcome.

"What think you, Barualli?" he asked of the aged chief who was his adviser. "Why did these white men enter our country, and why do they linger?"

The old chief smiled.

"I grow old, Lord of the Incas," said Barualli with a smile, "but my memory is still young. It is the yellow metal that brought them here and they would depart taking it with them. Were they greater in number and more strongly armed, it would be again as it was many years ago when the Spaniard came to Peru and murdered my lord's grandfather, Atahualpa. They have heard that tale and seek to enrich themselves the same.

"So it was in the past and so it will be again. The white men worship this yellow metal. My lord may not have forgotten how in his father's time there came one, a lone Spaniard, who dwelt here seven months and departed satisfied when he was given much gold. His tale, too, they may have heard. My lord's father should have slain that Spaniard or ever he allowed him to go back to his people with the yellow metal, the possession of which all white men covet.

"And," concluded the old chief, "did not Tarupanoma find these white men at the shining mountain gathering the glittering rocks to carry to their boats?"

Guascar looked keenly at Barualli, then fell into deep thought. Presently he said:

"If I should allow that they return to the river with the metal they desire, is it not that again and again white men will come to disturb our quiet living? That may not be, Barualli; yet have they been my guests and danced at the feast. I may not slay them."

Then Barualli thought a while. Presently his aged face became lit with a shrewd cunning.

"Let them depart, Lord of the Incas," he said. "Let them carry to their boats that which they covet from the mountain. Even send out warriors to aid them in carrying it to their boats. In the meantime, send a messenger to Taruma, King of Aromaia, speaking of our fears lest these white men come again and again, seeking more.

"The Aromaia are the friends of Guascar and pledged to guard the entrance to his kingdom. It may be that these white men have made enemies before coming to Manoa and may never reach the great water with their load of metal. Taruma, son of Morequito, should be wise in his generation."

Guascar half-closed his eyes and nodded understanding. He and his adviser talked together for some time, then a messenger was sent to Tarupanoma, bidding the latter bring the white men to the presence of the king.

This summons came as a relief to Butshead, although he was uneasy as to what it portended. But anything was better than the uncertainty which hung over the white men. His uneasiness was somewhat abated by the graciousness with which

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Guascar and his chiefs received them in the palace. Guascar, through Barualli, Tarupanoma and Master Sparrow as interpreter, came to the point at once.

"Is it not truth," he asked, "that the white men came to the land of Guascar seeking the yellow metal?"

Sparrow, after conveying the question to his comrades and discussing an answer, openly admitted that this was true. After a conference with the chiefs Guascar talked somewhat at length. He said that the yellow metal was in such abundance in his country that a quantity of it could well be spared.

Unfortunately, in times past Guascar's people had suffered much through the white man's covetousness of this yellow metal. Once they had been robbed of all their household vessels, which were sacred to the people. But if the stone from the shining mountain was all that the white men desired, they were welcome to as much of it as they could carry.

When this was translated into English by Sparrow the delight of Gorges and his company knew no bounds. Butshead, alone of that company, stared at the king as if trying to penetrate the motive of such generosity.

"Ask the king," said Gorges, "if he will lend us a hand or two of his warriors to carry some of the yellow stone to the boats, we being short-handed."

Guascar immediately said that he would command Tarupanoma and his men to aid them, whereupon Sparrow, after conferring with his delighted comrades, informed the king that the white men were ready to return to the river as soon as it suited Guascar's pleasure.

Presently returned to the house in which they lodged, the white men, getting over their first delight, stared at one another in amazement over their good fortune. Not only were they free to leave Manoa with whole skins but the labor of transporting a fortune in gold from the shining mountain to the boats was to be borne in the main by Guascar's warriors.

It seemed unbelievable to the cautious Scot, Fergus, who looked at Butshead and shook his head doubtfully. Butshead laughed queerly. He felt that there must be some ulterior motive behind such seeming generosity. He said as much to Gorges.

"Croaking again, Dickon. I ever think that thou hast no heart for the gold. But why ha' doubts o' the old blackamoor's good intent? As he said himself, they have overmuch of a metal they ha' little use for."

They wasted little time in preparations for the departure and no obstacles were placed in their way. In the dawn of the following day they marched through the streets of El Dorado for the last time and came to the landing by the lake. This time there was no gathering to watch them as upon their arrival. Eyes watched them, no doubt, from the roofs, but there was none to mourn their departure very grievously. They were escorted again by Tarupanoma and his rural guards.

At the landing, much to the uneasy distress of the whites, they were again blindfolded. It was clear that the Orejones did not intend the strangers to mark at which point of the opposite shore the trail from the mountain came in from the wall of green jungle.

On the way across the lake Butshead was filled with the dread of helplessness, a fear that at any moment the *canoa* in which he sat with Fergus and some others might be tipped over and he and his comrades left to drown while the unblinded warriors swam ashore.

But nothing of the kind happened. Still, it was with relief that Butshead felt the firm ground under his feet again when they reached the further shore. The blindfolding was not removed, but, as before, the whites were formed into line. Then, guided by the Indians, they began the return march over the trail by which, presumably, they had been brought from the mountain.

After an hour's steady progress Tarupanoma called a halt and the bandages were removed. The white men at once looked around them. They were apparently on no regular road, as had been the case when they traveled toward El Dorado. Instead, the unbroken jungle rose all around them. Clearly the Orejones meant to baffle them as to all direction.

THAT this was the only deception the Indians were practising upon the whites was suggested by the fact that Tarupanoma and his men carried wide-mouthed baskets, or sacks slung about their brown shoulders. These

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receptacles were made of woven fiber ropes. In these it must be they intended to carry the gold for the white men. The uneasiness of the whites was minimized by this evidence that, whatever else the natives intended, Guascar's promise and command were to be fulfilled.

Their spirits, depressed somewhat during the blindfolding, rose again. Some of the men even started to sing as the march was continued. They burst into cheers when, after several hours, they came out upon the grassy clearing which surrounded the base of the bald mountain of metallic rock.

The heaps of ore which Gorges and his men had collected before their capture stood undisturbed, and these Tarupanoma and his men quickly loaded into the rope sacks. Gorges and his friends watched the operations with a lofty air of proprietorship, but did not do any work themselves.

As the sun grew hotter the adventurers sought a shady spot among the larger boulders and sat around in a circle, discussing the golden future which was spreading before them, each stating his idea of the utility of wealth according to his taste or whim. The general fancy ran to the luxuries of eating and drinking without ever working, although Gorges developed an ambition to have a title.

He had heard that titles could be bought, and "Sir Bulkhead Gorges" had a bluff ring to it. Scroop saw himself as master of a prosperous inn on the North Road. Fergus bethought him of a farm with sheep in the Vale of Clyde, while Sparrow the scrivener planned to deal in books and old manuscripts somewhere about St. Paul's. To the if-I-were-rich fancies of humankind there is no end.

Butshead was not in the circle. He wandered about among the broken rocks, picking up pieces of ore, breaking them with other pieces and testing the yellow seams with the fluid in his little bottle. Every now and then he dropped the broken ore into a large calabash which he had carried as a canteen in his travels since leaving the *Fearless*.

The sun was fiercely hot by the time the woven sacks were bulging with ore and the Indians ready to start toward the river and the boats. Gorges then proposed that Tarupanoma and his men deposit their first load aboard and return for more. One load would not fill the boats or make the venture worth while when there were nine more men on the *Fearless* to claim a share. He also proposed that the white men camp where they were for the night, and this was agreed to, Tarupanoma not dissenting. The Indians presently started off into the jungle, Gorges and company chuckling as they watched them with bent backs staggering under their loads of ore.

In the morning the Indians returned with empty sacks and bringing fresh water in kegs from the river. Gorges and his fellows had in the meantime collected more piles of ore. The Indians made a second trip with another load, returning in the late dusk.

Again camp was made for the night and in the morning the Indians loaded up for the third and last trip. And now the white men accompanied them, after filling their pockets and every receptacle they could devise with choice bits of ore. Then they started for the river but not without regret that they were compelled to leave the mountain itself.

"Ye needna fear," said Fergus. "It'll be there when ye come back again."

The Indians made a shorter route of it than the adventurers had done in their dismal night journey through the jungle. The dusk was thickening when, quite abruptly, they came upon the river and the boats, although for some time before they had heard the roar of the cataract.

When the Indians had emptied their sacks into the boats it seemed to Gorges and his followers that their troubles, which were really just beginning, were at an end; for there, swaying in the eddies under the river bank, were the two ship's boats, laden almost to the gunwales with sparkling, yellow ore.

Only Butshead noticed that the *canoa* in which Maquarima had traveled with them to this point, was missing.

CHAPTER XXII

TARUMA TAKES TOLL

THE sight of the boats deep-laden with the yellow ore roused the adventurers to a burst of cheering. It seemed indeed as if after all their vicissitudes success had crowned their expedition. But for the swift closing night they would have started

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on their trip down the river at once, so eager were they to regain the *Fearless*, put to sea and be clear of all further possibility of disaster.

But they dared not travel in the dark. The Caroni branch was swift and so deeply laden were the two boats that the slightest accident would mean swamping.

Possessing their avaricious souls in patience they decided to camp for the night. Tarupanoma and his men seemed willing to camp with them and even to serve as if the duty laid upon them by Guascar was not yet ended. The warriors built a roaring fire. Presently one of them, who had previously separated from the party, appeared carrying a deer which he had dropped with an arrow somewhere by the way. Upon this the Indians and the whites feasted, the Orejones in silence, the white men with an air of almost boyish festivity.

All hands lay down to sleep early, meaning to make a start down the river at the break of dawn.

But the dawn brought several surprizes. In the first place, the Orejones had completely vanished. It may have been that they had made a start back toward El Dorado before daybreak, leaving the white men still asleep; but Butshead was inclined to think that there might be some other reason behind the silent disappearance.

That a guilty conscience might be at the bottom of it was suggested when it was presently discovered that the savages had made away with every bit of portable iron in the two boats. The boat-hooks were gone and two small anchors, besides minor iron fittings. The only metal left was the small brass carronade which was mounted on the bow of one of the boats. When this depredation was brought to the attention of Gorges he laughed carelessly.

"They could ha' had 'em for the asking," said he, "and welcome at that. A fair exchange is no robbery and two boat-loads o' golden ore is fair enough for a few iron hooks. But why, think you, did they leave the carronade? You can't say they could ha' been afeard of it, probably having no notion of its use."

It was Fergus who suggested the solution of this riddle.

"It's brass," said he. "Maybe they thought it made o' the yellow stuff they ha'e overmuch o'."

This, which may have been the fact of the matter, tickled the risibilities of the adventurers hugely. But Butshead did not laugh. He sprang into the boat upon which the carronade was mounted, opened a locker set in the bows and, after staring into it, looked up and said:

"They've done worse than leave the carronade. They've stolen every lead bullet and iron ball we had. Happen they turned this trick during that first trip with the ore when we were idlin' back there at the mountain."

That the Orejones had stolen the grosser metals because they valued them more than gold, and for that reason alone, was clear when investigation showed that the cache of gunpowder which they had made in the ground was untouched. The adventurers scratched their heads and wondered a while before the gravity of the matter dawned upon them.

"Here's a coil," said Scroop. "Here we be with two boat-loads of gold and plenty of arms and powder and not a bullet to fire if we meet trouble in the river."

It was not as bad as that, for each man had his pistols and musket loaded and primed and a small quantity of powder and shot about his person. But they would be in a perilous pass if after a skirmish or two with hostile Indians they found themselves reduced to firing blank charges. It was too much to hope that these would frighten Indians who had had experience with the guns of Spaniards in various past collisions.

An uneasy dismay descended upon the adventurers at this development, but it did not last long. They had no reason to anticipate conflict with the natives of the lower river, at least this side of Caribana's town. Taruma and his people were friendly—presumably so. They had no intention of revisiting the women warriors of Carraori. They dared not risk that tortuous short-cut by which they had ascended from the delta.

As for Caribana and his warriors, they must chance boarding the *Fearless* in the dark. Then, no matter how the people of Macuregai felt disposed toward the whites, the latter felt they could hold their own once they were aboard their ship. They would have the means and the men to fight, even if they did not make discretion the better part of valor and slip out of the channel to the open sea.

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Whatever design, if any, there might be behind the general actions of the Orejones the company presently made their optimistic hopes father to their thoughts and prepared to start down-stream.

It was in the stowing of the powder and the men themselves that a fresh difficulty presented itself. So laden were the two boats with the golden ore that it was almost impossible to add the further bulk and weight of eleven men. It was then that others besides Butshead noted that the Indian *canoa* which Maquarima had occupied with Sparrow and Godwin was missing. This meant that two more men must be added to the already overladen boats where nine had occupied them when they were light.

"What for d'ye think they should ha' stolen the *canoa?*" asked Gorges irritably. Minor mysteries were beginning to get on his nerves.

"Probably Maquarima took it himself to get back to Morequito," Godwin suggested.

"But he couldn't ha' got to it," said Scroop. "That arrow—and the blood."

"But we saw nothing of the Indian himsel'," said Fergus. "Pray Heeven he didna' get back to his people wounded wi' a white man's bullet in him."

The Scot was glowering at Gorges as he made this suggestion. Gorges scowled uneasily.

"What for did ye fire, anyway?" Fergus persisted. "The man served us well and it was a puir return to make."

"What sense is there in standin' here imaginin' troubles ahead?" demanded Gorges angrily, to cover his own misgivings. "Come, lads!" he added with a sudden laugh. "Here's the yellow stuff aboard. Let's tackle our troubles—if so be there are any ahead—when we come to them. How are we to divide up so as not to swamp our craft?"

Then followed a discussion which ended with a proposition from Sparrow, who had been talking apart with his mate, Godwin the mapmaker.

"Once we make Morequito," said Sparrow, "no doubt Taruma, who is friendly to us, will lend us a couple of extra *canoas* to continue down the river. In the meantime, this part of the country is familiar to Master Godwin and me. What we propose is that, while the main party proceeds by boat, he and I travel by the jungle trail afoot."

"Can ye do it?" cried Gorges, relieved.

"We have the map and ha' done it before in our exploring," said Sparrow.

It was settled. Within half an hour the boats started down the swift current, Sparrow and Godwin having previously disappeared into the jungle, traveling parallel with the river in a northeasterly direction.

The boats, despite their heavy lading, avoided all mishap that first day and made the old camping-ground at Caima Island late in the afternoon. There they camped for the night. The adventurers had little to eat save some wild fruits and the remains of the deer. Urged by the need of a solid meal they got up at daybreak and prepared to push on to Morequito. This they hoped to reach shortly after noon, the current being strong in their favor.

THEY were in high spirits when they sighted the low-built houses of Taruma's capital, but were quite unprepared for the surprize that came out to greet them.

Apparently Sparrow and Godwin had arived there before them, traveling by a compass line through the jungle which enabled them to avoid the twistings of the river reaches. Apparently, too, the warriors of Aromaia had been looking out for the whites as much as the latter had been spying ahead for sight of the town of Aromaia.

A dozen *canoas* shot out from the beach of Morequito and came rapidly toward them. At first Gorges and company took them for a reception committee in honor of Taruma's friends. But presently it was perceived that the warriors were fully armed. Their craft came on with a businesslike speed which savored somehow of belligerence.

Within a certain distance of the white men's boats all of the *canoas* but one came to a pause, the paddlers holding them up against the current but coming no nearer.

The other *canoa* came steadily on, and now Butshead made out two figures among its crew that were familiar.

"Sparrow and Godwin!" he said. "They'll give us the word."

Within a few boatlengths of the gold-laden craft the *canoa* containing the two

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white men also came to a slow drift. Sparrow cupped his hands and shouted to Butshead that he brought the whites no good news.

Their story was briefly told. They had entered Taruma's town but an hour before and had immediately been seized and held again as hostages. Sparrow said one reason for this was that word of the white men's offense against King Caribana through their conduct at Carraori had been brought by messenger to Aromaia, and that Taruma was called upon by his brother prince to show no friendship to the whites.

Further than that, and more offensively grave to the Aromaia, was the fact that the tribe's courtesy in sending one of its warriors to guide the whites to the Caroni Falls had been requited by the murder of Maquarima, who had returned only to die at the feet of Taruma with a bullet wound in his back.

Nothing was said, however, of a runner who had brought a message to Taruma from King Guascar of the Orejones concerning the future danger to the Orenoqueponi if the white men returned to England with the material evidence of Guiana's riches.

"Well," said Gorges when Sparrow paused for breath. "What's to do?"

"I bring the word from the King of Aromaia, Taruma," said Sparrow. "He holds Godwin and me, as his uncle did before, hostages until such time as Sir Walter Raleigh shall come in person to redeem us. Taruma holds that you are evil men and have no authority of Capuaralli, but he will spare your lives upon two conditions.

"First, ye are to deliver into his hands the man who fired the shot that killed Maquarima. He will be dealt with according to native justice. Second. Ye are to surrender the ore from the shining mountain.

"These are the conditions," concluded Sparrow, and his face was as grave as his words. "Surrender the murderer and the ore and the rest of ye may pass down the river unharmed—at least by the people of Aromaia. Ye may take time to council together, but if ye attempt to pass unheeding, Taruma's warriors will attack and spare none."

The *canoa* containing Sparrow and Godwin swung around and returned to the others lying in wait for the upshot. The white men's boats drew together for council. In the foremost, that bearing the carronade, were Gorges, Fergus, Scroop and Butshead. In the other were the remaining five men, Sparrow and Godwin in the Indian *canoa* making up the total of eleven who had come from El Dorado.

There was silence for a full minute, all looking to the mutineer as if, he having brought about the mischief, they expected him to find a way out of it.

It must be said that there was no fear in the eyes of Bulkhead Gorges as he met those of his comrades, all turned upon him.

"Well," said he boldly, "d'ye propose to give me up, lads, to the blackamoors and save your own skins?"

No one answered. The eyes that had been turned upon Gorges were suddenly averted. He laughed rather harshly.

"Maybe," said he, "some o' ye are thinking I ought to stand up and say, 'Here I be. 'Twas my hand fired the shot. Come and take me.' Not that I think Sparrow or Godwin has told them which o' us done it an' I'm thinkin' that none o' you will tell either.

"What's it to be, lads? Will ye give me up to these blackamoors to be tortured for vengeance, or do we sink or swim together as mates that are all on the same lay? What d'ye stand to gain by givin' me up or me givin' myself up? Ye may save your skins, but ye will ha' lost all ye ha' so risked your skins to get—the gold. Give up the man that fired the shot, says this blackamoor, and give up the gold, too!

"What d'ye stand to gain but to drift down this rotten river hungerin' and starvin' an' reachin'—mebbe—the *Fearless* as empty-handed as ye left an' with a story that will be as poor tellin' as hearin'.

"Come, lads, I put it to ye!" said Gorges, his voice taking on a ring that aroused Butshead's admiration for the pluck behind it. "Say the word and ashore we go, hand over the gold without a whimper and then, when ye ha' thanked Taruma for his gentle mercy, pack off down the river like whipped curs, leavin' me to my own funeral.

"Say the word! That, or sink or swim together as mates, holdin' to what we ha' sweated to win and ha' got and fightin' to the last ditch any that would dictate tarms to us. It ain't for me that's in the lurch

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to speak for ye, but an I were on the other side of the game I'd hear no talk o' tarms but say, fight—even if it's fight from here to the river mouth.

"We got the gold, lads—here in the boats! Will ye give it up to the first that asks for it?"

There was a general muttering among the men. Apparently not one of them had arrived at any decision for himself. Their lives against Gorges' life was a matter that might not have troubled their consciences greatly, but the matter of the gold thrown into the side of loss bade them pause. Scroop, Gorges' stanch ally, seeing how the wind blew this way and that, entered his voice with sudden decision.

"No, by the lord!" he exclaimed. "Gorges were a fool to fire that shot, but we been all fools one way or another from start to finish. Gorges has been our captain right through and a good captain, too, for all his faults. Besides, there's the gold! We ha' gone through a lot to get it an' we'll go through more afore we agrees to lose it. I'm wi' Gorges! Fight, says he, an' fight, says I!"

The eyes of Gorges flashed over the faces of the other eight as if gathering them to his will. The muttering increased, but now there was a new note in it. Gorges' face lighted up. They were his.

"Fight it is!" said he finally. "Cheer up, lads. They'll break at the first volley. Scroop," he added, "I'll be troublin' ye to load up that carronade."

"Aye, aye, but there's no shot," said Scroop.

Gorges chuckled as he picked up a handful of the smallest pieces of ore he could find in the pile and handed the stuff over to his crony.

"Happen ye never heard o' the old days when men were forced to shoot stones from cannon?" said he. "But happen this'll be the first time men were riddled wi' gold!"

In the meantime, Gorges ordered that the sweeps be resumed. Presently the gold-laden boats again forged eastward down the river. At their first movement there was considerable excitement among the fleet of native war-*canoas*. The action of the whites was taken to mean refusal of the conditions and open defiance. Butshead saw a figure rise in one of the *canoas* and heard a voice with a familiar ring issuing some command in the native language. It was Taruma. He turned his face toward the mate and pointed his spear at him. It seemed to Butshead that some part of his commands concerned him.

THEN the *canoas* spread out and advanced, the paddlers dipping the water madly and the armed warriors standing up and yelling. The two ship's boats fell apart at Gorges' order and the men in each held their muskets and pistols, loaded with powder and the last of their lead, in readiness for the attack.

A shower of arrows preceded the bodily collision. At close quarters the whites replied by emptying their pistols. Several of the warriors fell overboard and sank. None of the men in the boat with the carronade were touched by the arrows, but one man in the other, which was several lengths behind, uttered a yell and fell athwart the gunwale with a yard-long arrow sticking in his breast.

Again the arrows showered and now the white men opened fire with their muskets, doing deadly hurt among the savages. It was about this time that Butshead noticed with surprize that the main attack seemed directed against the second boat, that the warriors either shot high or did not shoot at all at the boat in which were Gorges, Scroop, Fergus and himself.

But one of the *canoas* shot directly toward the boat with the carronade. It was then that Gorges gave Scroop the word to touch off the small cannon, which was loaded with powder and gold ore. The brass cannon exploded with a terrific roar. Next instant the oncoming *canoa* was filled with water and its crew of paddlers and warriors were sinking or swimming in the river.

At the same time Butshead witnessed the fate of the second boat. No less than four *canoas* had pounced upon it. The five white men in it, having no time to reload their guns, were fighting with their hangers, endeavoring to ward off the spear-thrusts of the warriors and their attempts to board.

In the mêlée the ship's boat, already overladen, began to take water over the lip of the gunwale. Almost while one might have drawn a gasp the craft became swamped. Next moment it foundered beneath its deadweight of ore and sank, leaving such as survived the attack floundering, swimming or drowning. Around them pressed the attacking *canoas*

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and Butshead sickened as he saw the warriors fiercely plunging their spears into the water.

The boat with the carronade, in the meantime, had drifted quite clear of the fight. To the wonder of the four aboard it the warriors made no move to pursue or destroy it. In fact, there presently came across the water, from that part of the fleet which had taken no actual part in the attack, a cry that ended the conflict. It was as if Taruma considered the honor of his tribe sufficiently satisfied and desired no further vengeance.

The surviving boat, caught by the stronger current farther out, was being rapidly borne down-stream and away from the scene of disaster. The four aboard were silent, stunned by the swiftness and unexpectedness of the calamity. Butshead felt sick and faint. He had eaten next to nothing in twenty-four hours and to the horror of the thing he had just witnessed was added a heart-heaviness which, unknown to him, was shared by his friend Taruma.

"God forgive them and us!" groaned the young mate, his head sunk in his hands.

"Half the gold's gone, Gorges!" he heard Scroop whisper hoarsely.

"Aye," said Bulkhead with a weak attempt to brazen, "but half o' them that was to share are gone with it. That kind o' evens things."

Fergus, seated in the stern with his feet elevated over the pile of ore, said nothing, but studied Gorges with a mingling of curiosity and contempt. At the same time he was thinking that it was lucky he, at least, had been in the same boat with Taruma's friend, Barasai. It was the only way he could account for their salvation.

Then the boat drifted in silence; and there was no pursuit.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE DELTA

FOUR days later found the survivors of the ill-fated expedition in greater straits and greater peril of slow or violent death than they had been at any time.

While yet they drifted rapidly down the main stream of the gigantic river in their ore-laden boat their difficulties seemed not insuperable. They suffered none from thirst, for the river water at this point was good, except along the muddied, tainted inshore, but they were beset by a consuming and everlasting hunger. This was rendered the more acute by their labors with the sweeps with which, short-handed as they were, they must constantly toil to keep the boat in currents that were favorable and not too violent.

During these four days and nights they were not molested by Indians; in fact they saw no sign of a human being on the river or along the jungle-walled shores. Nevertheless the brass carronade ever carried its ready load of powder and golden grape. Also they took advantage of a half moon and clear nights, as against the insufferable exposure of blazing days, to make progress only between dusk and dawn.

Every morning they worked the boat into the overhanging bushes of the shore and made their camp in hiding. During the day they slept after they had eaten of such food as they could obtain from the jungle. This consisted mainly of wild fruits upon some of which they took long chances of poison, and such small animals as they stirred up and were able to kill with their muskets.

They had no shot save what they made from chunks of ore smashed into small pieces. Their most fortunate bag, and one which provided several solid if somewhat doubtful meals, was a young ape which Gorges brought down from an overhanging limb. Scroop and Gorges ate the flesh without compunction. Fergus tried it with a wry face and allowed that it was fairly tasty at that.

"And what for no," he commented dryly, "seein' it was shot doon wi' a golden nugget worth a wheen o' sillar?"

Butshead, however, would have none of it, appeasing his hunger as best he might with the boiled heart of young cabbage-palms, the same vegetable which, when fermented, yielded the white liquor which had wrought such havoc with the expedition. In its fresh state the core of the palm was as nourishing as boiled but unfermented barley.

The further east and toward the sea the adventurers traveled without being attacked by Indians, the higher rose the hopes of Gorges and Scroop and the more determined they grew to reach the *Fearless* with their boat-load of golden ore.

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Already they had become indifferent to the fate which had overcome so many of their fellows, especially the five who had lost their lives in the attack by Taruma's people.

As Gorges had said, even if half the gold went to the bottom with these unfortunates, the number with whom the remaining treasure was to be shared was reduced in proportion. Already in his mind, and possibly in whispered converse with Scroop, Gorges was devising some scheme by which he and his crony might possibly cheat Fergus, Butshead, Barbary and the men on the *Fearless* of their share before they reached England.

Fergus and Butshead, on the other hand, showed an indifference to the treasure which increased as the gold-hunger of Gorges and Scroop grew more feverish. A curious listlessness hung upon the young mate. The Scot was strangely silent, his far blue eyes betraying him often in a reverie.

When he did talk, the subject of his thought seemed to be his native Scotland. Time and again he would break his silence to tell Butshead some tale of his boyhood in far-off Vale of Clyde. Once he startled his young comrade by saying abruptly:

"Lad, I'll be thinkin' I'm not long for this world. Ye ken," and he smiled in a queer way, "it's a way of our people. When we get near the end oor mind gangs back to the beginnin'; a hankerin'-like for the auld place."

It may be the Scot's second sight, but so it is, and so it was in Fergus' case, although Butshead attached little import to the omen. The lad was not only listless, but greatly depressed. For one thing, the violent manner in which his friendship with Taruma had ended had left a wound in his heart. Then the fate of Sparrow and Godwin was something which was to hang over him with heavy misgiving for many a year.

For the rest, aside from the peril and discomfort of his present situation, he had no reason to be discontented with the manner in which things were turning out for himself and Sir Walter Raleigh. Whatever motive had inspired him to embark with this mad expedition—and that was simply to watch and ward in the interests of his master—he was now confident that those who survived would gain not a pennyworth for all their hardship and suffering.

Half of the ore from the shining mountain was at the bottom of the Orinoco; half of those who had sought it were dead. The other half of the treasure might also be lost, and if the survivors escaped with their lives and the rags on their backs they would be more than ordinarily lucky. For himself, his ambition was only to regain London Town and whisper to Raleigh of all that had happened and place in his hands the information which he had silently and secretly acquired concerning El Dorado and the riches of Guiana. Then. . . .

In his mind's eye he saw himself at Sir Walter's right hand, at the head of an efficient expedition backed by the queen's favor and the queen's ships, Sparrow and Godwin redeemed and an empire and a fabulous treasure added to English dominion. As for his uncle, Master Simon and the conspirators, Alderman Piggott, the Earl of Essex and the others? He would break into a chuckle when he thought of them. From the time the *Fearless* had sailed with her drunken captain and piratic crew from Plymouth he had known that Essex and company stood to gain nothing. Gorges and company had determined upon that.

Butshead's curious indifference to the treasure which bore down the boat to the gunwale lip was a source of unending irritation to Gorges. Time and again when the boat came near being swamped in the cross-currents and rapids of the river, or when it collided with sunken logs or sandbars, the young mate aroused the rage of Gorges and Scroop by throwing down the guiding sweep and suggesting that the whole treasure be cast overboard.

This suggestion enraged Scroop even more than it did Gorges. The gold-madness and the vision of that prosperous inn on the North Road was growing daily upon Bulkhead's crony. With him it was plain avarice. "Sir Bulkhead" Gorges held to a pluckier view. He was willing to risk his life if there was a chance of winning out with it and with riches, too.

Fergus said nothing for or against Butshead's repeated proposition. In his canny mind the Scot was considering the treasures of the earth in the balance against that greater treasure—life. The thought of the dead ape, shot for food with a golden

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nugget, stuck in his mind with ironic persistence. He thought he understood when once or twice, Butshead, after some new grounding or peril of swamping was escaped, stared at the ore piled up to the gunwale and laughed contemptuously.

On the morning of the fourth day the boat, traveling on the swift current, reached that point of the great river where it broke among numerous islands into the labyrinthine waterways of the delta.

From the village of Caribana they had traveled up through the delta by devious channels to the village of Carraori. Guided by the Macuregai the white men had lost all sense of direction, save in general.

They knew that the Macuregai town stood at the mouth of the tributary farthest to the west. They might now descend and trust to luck and the tributaries running east and north to bring them out upon the open sea. That reached, it should not be difficult to find the channel in which they had left the *Fearless*.

This plan they decided upon that night in a camp council. On the morning of the fifth day from Morequito they worked the boat among the islands until they entered a fairly large river which bore at least in the right direction. And now the worst of their difficulties and suffering began.

The river continued in a broad and smooth-flowing stream for many leagues; then suddenly it split up among an archipelago of low-lying islands into devious other rivers, and at the forking of these they encountered dangerous rapids and shallows in which time and again they grounded or all but foundered.

Repeatedly it was necessary for the four men to wade in the shallows and work the boat off into the deeper currents. Once the boat, suddenly freed, all but escaped from them, caught suddenly in the boring surge of the channel. That time, when the adventurers had dragged themselves dripping and exhausted over the gunwale to which they had desperately clung, Butshead threw himself across the ore and gave way to a fit of almost hysterical laughter. The thought of the treasure-laden craft forging down-stream, untenanted by its crew, who were left waist-deep and helpless in the wilds of the Orinoco delta, appealed to feelings that he could not control.

Gorges and Scroop cursed him, while Fergus shook his head, fearing among other things for the sanity of the lad. From that time on, as difficulties increased, Gorges and his crony developed a growing irritation which they vented upon Butshead and his friend Fergus by words and looks that threatened some climax of rage between the two uncongenial parties.

TO ADD to their miseries they were starving. They could not land upon solid ground to camp or build a fire or obtain food, even the raw fruits which now and then glowed among the greenery. The islands and banks were but a mere overgrown extension of the river, hopeless swamps in which the only living creatures seemed to be snakes and water-fowl and an oysterlike shell-fish which grew upon the lower branches of the everlasting mangroves.

The first time the desperation of hunger drove them to eat these shell-fish the whole four were seized with violent illness. As soon as they had recovered they were forced by hunger to eat them again, but this time they cooked them upon a small fire built on top of the pile of ore. The cooked shell-fish did not have the same deleterious effects.

Occasionally they shot down long-legged, slow-winged water-fowl of the heron variety, but usually the bird fell behind or wide of the unwieldy boat which they could not back with its deadweight against the current. When they were fortunate enough to grab a dead bird as the boat shot past it they found that it was with hardly any flesh and tasted fishy and rank even when cooked.

Of water they of course had plenty by dipping over the side of the boat. In the fetid, miasmatic delta the humid heat drove them to drink continually. The water was hot, yellow and tainted with rotten vegetation. That it was sodden with fever they soon discovered. Between exhaustion, insufficient and rank food and the muddy water, every man of them found himself presently in fever.

By this time the continued deviations and windings of the offshooting streams had carried the boat so hither and thither that they had lost all sense of direction save as the sun showed they were traveling generally to the northeast. Save for the knowledge that all these rivers merged in the sea somewhere ahead of them, it may

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be said that these four men with their load of golden ore were hopelessly lost in the Orinoco delta.

On the seventh day all four were light-headed from exhaustion, starvation and fever. Fergus alone was silent. The others were talkative according to their individual fancies. Butshead burst into song occasionally or again he would laugh curiously, whereat Gorges would curse him to silence.

Gorges kept his head better than any. He would not give up. He continually encouraged Scroop to do battle with his sweep and keep the boat in the current by speaking of the gold and the luxury that life would hold once they brought the treasure to England. Scroop, perhaps the most light-headed of all, developed the conviction that there was a Jonah aboard and that that person of ill-luck was Dickon Butshead.

"Ain't he been a croaker since we left Plymouth?" he snarled peevishly. "It's ever him that would throw the gold overboard. What I says is—throw him over and mark me if the luck don't change!"

It was in the dusk of that day that the crisis came. Their efforts to pole the boat clear of the sand-bars and snags had completely exhausted them. Ahead of them appeared another of the many branchings of one stream into several. A low island had been silted up at the forking and at the point of this, toward which the laden boat was rushing, the water piled up in rapids over extended shallows.

Butshead, whether from despair or with design, suddenly drew in his sweep and sank over it with a groan. Gorges and Scroop uttered a yell of warning and tried to regalvanize him into renewed action. But it was too late. The boat swung broadside, was caught in the rapids and drove with a jolt and a sluggish grind upon the sand-bar.

And there it lay, not high and dry, but stuck fast as if tentacles had reached up and clutched it. A few minutes were spent in heaping upon the head of Butshead curses which had such violence behind them that Fergus' hand stole to the butt of his pistol, fearing for the life of his friend.

But presently, when their rage was momentarily exhausted, Gorges and Scroop climbed out of the boat, as did Fergus and Butshead, the latter wearily, as if he recognized the futility of the game. They tugged and worked like Trojans to withdraw the boat from the grip of the clinging sand, but could not even budge it, for the rapids were pressing against their efforts.

Then all at once, as they momentarily paused and glared at one another, Scroop seemed to go stark mad. His face turned purple; his eyes, fixed upon Dickon Butshead, became fixed in a mad glaze. Without warning his hand flew to his belt and he whipped out a knife. With a yell of inarticulate, insane rage he lunged at Butshead. The latter happened to be staring blankly at the darkening wall of jungle.

But Fergus had been on the alert for some such outburst. He had no time to draw the pistol which he had fingered more than once during the day, but quick as a flash he seized up from the pile in the boat a chunk of ore half the size of a man's head and hurled it with all his strength at Scroop.

Before the knife descended the lump of ore, a solid, weighty mass, struck Scroop right in the middle of his forehead. He staggered back; the knife fell from his hand, and he fell like a poled ox.

Next minute Butshead and Fergus, the latter horrified at the deadly trueness of his aim, were staring at the fallen man. Scroop's body, swirled in the rapids, was caught up by the current of the deeper stream and carried away. Still staring, they saw the body turn in the water; a face smeared with blood rose above the surface; a hand and part of an arm lifted; then the Orinoco closed over another of the scores of gold-hunters it has engulfed in its deadly bosom.

Both Butshead and Fergus had forgotten Gorges for the moment. For the time—only a few seconds—Gorges had stood knee-deep in the water, transfixed more with astonishment than horror at the fate of his crony. Then rage succeeded. Out of the boat he snatched his loaded musket and fired it almost pointblank at the Scot.

Butshead heard the gold slug rip past his ear and saw Fergus clap a hand to his breast. The blue-eyed man from the Vale of Clyde fell on his knees in the water, clutched the gunwale of the stranded boat with his left hand and sank his head upon it.

"Fergus! Fergus!" cried Butshead, turning his back upon Gorges who stood there

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foaming at the mouth, crazed with rage and fever.

The mate tried to raise the Scot but could not. Fergus shifted his head sidewise on his arm and showed a face gray with the shadow of death.

"I ken't it, lad," was all he said.

Behind Butshead's turned back Gorges still stood with the smoking musket in his hand. His face was now sullen and his eyes shifted from the pile of ore to the defenseless back of the mate. Suddenly he replaced the musket in the boat and drew his pistol from his belt.

For a moment it seemed as if he thought to make a clean sweep of it, but there came again to his mind the thought that, if anything should happen to Barbary, on this lad alone might he depend to navigate the *Fearless*. Still he held the pistol half-leveled at the mate's back—and waited.

Fergus did not speak again. An odd smile came across his grizzled, half-turned face as he kneeled in the water, his attitude for all the world like that of a weary child half-asleep over a bedtime prayer. Suddenly his arm slipped from the gunwale and he sank backward into the stream. Next instant his body, too, was caught up by the engulfing current and drifted away into the gathering gloom.

Dazed, with a curious suspension of all his faculties, Butshead turned upon Gorges and confronted a leveled pistol. The ruffian's eyes were expectant and keen and his words when he spoke were slow and metallic.

"Scroop was my crony," he snarled. "Fergus was yours. That kind o' evens things, m'lad. What's it to be? I ha' no mind to shoot thee any more'n I had to finish him."

"Shoot!" said Butshead, and there was an infinite weariness in his voice.

"Thou'lt think different in a while," said Gorges. "Thou an' I can be good friends and we ha' need o' each other to get out of this mess. I reckon the fever has turned our heads this while back. But you an' me won't give up the fight—eh? We'll get out o' this yet. Gimme your pistol," said he sharply, giving his own weapon a significant forward jerk.

Butshead handed over his pistol.

"I'll take that knife o' yours, too," said Gorges. "Ye see," he added grimly, "things bein' as they are, you an' me can't sleep at the same time. 'Twill be watch and watch, an' until ye abate yer grudge I'm thinkin' I'll take the first. We'll talk in the morning, m'lad."

The night presently closed in—blackness spangled with million of fireflies and made raucous with the guttural uproar of the winged and reptilian denizens of the teeming nocturnal swamps.

In the stranded boat sat the two survivors, one dazedly indifferent, too stunned for sensation, the other alert, suspicious, with a ready pistol in his fist. The pile of ore lay between them. Neither spoke. Neither slept. The night dragged on, its fireflies a million rolling eyes, its brazen chorus the shrieking of mocking devils.

CHAPTER XXIV

LAGARTOS!

WITH the first graying of dawn Butshead stirred from the curious lethargy that had taken the place of sleep throughout the horrible night. At least he was alive, day was come again and the blood of youth urged once more to action.

Raising his head he dimly descried in the gray light Gorges reclining against the shot-locker in the bow. He was either asleep or in a heavy doze with the pistol limply held in his right hand. Butshead wondered what the man had feared. Even had the mate retained his weapons it would never have occurred to him to make an attack on Gorges while that worthy slept. In their predicament personal vengeance seemed a childish thing.

He had no regrets for Scroop, and regrets for Fergus, while human, would avail nothing. To consider, now, the right and wrong of what had happened on the previous night was equally vain. Perhaps Gorges had, or felt he had, some justification for that shot he had fired at the killer of his crony, Scroop. Had Gorges first attacked Fergus perhaps Butshead would have emptied his pistol into the breast of the rascally leader. The thing was done.

The loud squawking of a number of parrots, coming upon that lull of the nocturnal chorus which marks the jungle dawn, roused Gorges from his doze. He lay for some time eyeing Butshead as the light became stronger. Satisfied that the younger man was awake and eyeing him

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in turn he presently said with an attempt at jocularity:

"So here we be, m'lad. There's a night gone as we'd both as lief forget, I'm thinkin'. What sayest thou we try to get out o' this?"

"The sooner the better and more pleased I'll be," said Butshead calmly. "Maybe thou hast thought out how it's to be done."

"We'll ha' one more try at gettin' the boat off," said Gorges, sitting up and making to get into the water again. "Happen the sands may ha' shifted in the night."

Butshead did not seem to share his hope, but in silence he, too, got into the shallows and laid hands upon the gunwale. He laughed dryly when the laden craft budged no more than a solid rock. Gorges stood up, muttering curses and pondering deeply.

As he did so there came a plangent splash from the river channel to the right of the silt island. Both men turned sharply and saw a swirl of foam just about the place where the bodies of Scroop and Fergus had sunk out of sight. The disturbance of the water at this particular spot filled both with a momentary superstitious fear.

"What was that, boy?" whispered Gorges.

Butshead did not answer. His face was pale and quietly he climbed into the boat again. Gorges, hardly knowing why he did so, followed his example.

"We got to get out o' here," said he, his own ruddy face a shade paler. "It couldn't be—one o' them?"

"Most like it was a big *lagarto*," said Butshead, fixing his eyes on Gorges. "They'd be attracted there—more than one o' them."

Gorges stared at the ore, which blinked back with its yellow eyes. Butshead waited, hoping that the inevitable would dawn upon Gorges' mind at last. It did, but not until the mutineer had turned over every other alternative in his mind.

"Lad," he said at last and in a hoarse voice, "we've got to do it. Lordamighty, was there ever such luck? To think, after all we gone through, we ha' to jettison the whole treasure!"

Still Butshead said nothing, but waited. Gorges glared at him, glowered again at the golden ore, then groaned out loud. Again he fell into a pondering. This time the younger man helped him to a solution.

"Thou seest for thyself, Gorges. We must either unship the load or stay here and rot. Over with it, is what I say. Happen we might come back for it with some o' the *Fearless* men. But first we must get to the *Fearless*. It can't be much further."

"Aye," said Gorges, his face taking on a faint light of hope renewed, "but thinkest thou we could ever find the spot in this —— tangle o' rivers and swamps? The chances are agin it."

Butshead knew he spoke the truth. In fact, he was certain that five minutes after they abandoned the treasure—granting that the lightened boat could then be gotten off—they could no more find the spot again than if it were a needle dropped into a pile of loose hay. Gorges began to curse as he, too, realized it.

"And what sense is there," pursued Butshead, "in our sweating blood to bring what's left to the ship? It's little enough in the end and will be less still when 'tis shared between the *Fearless* men and them that wait for us in London."

Gorges looked at him with a shrewd narrowing of his eyes.

"Thou art a fool," said he, "to think I plan that way, or ever did. This gold is mine—and yours. Thou speakest truth when thou sayest 'twould make a miserable pittance if shared. I'd sink the lot and be satisfied if we could but come away with enough to satisfy ourselves, telling no man what we carried and swearing—which would be truth—that it was lost with all hands."

"But thou couldst never carry enough of this rock to repay the trick—not that thou couldst conceal about thee," said Butshead. "'Twould take a sack of it at least to be worth while."

Gorges groaned. "Sir Bulkhead" saw his carriage fade as a dream that is past. Again there sounded a splash from somewhere in the river channels. It might have been but a falling tree-trunk, however.

"I foresaw this from the time we came to the mountain and puzzled how we were to carry the ore to the boats," said the mate. "It took me that thou callst a fool to feather my own nest against just what has happened."

"How?" asked Gorges, scowling at him.

For answer the younger man grinned, swung around from his back the strong calabash which he had formerly used to

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carry water. He shook the gourd in Gorges' face and its contents rattled.

"That's gold!" said he. "Pure gold. An I bring it to London I can turn it into shining pieces that will be a fortune to one that had never more than a shilling to his name."

Gorges stared. Slowly it came to his memory how Butshead had gathered no pile of ore for himself back there at the mountain, but had wandered around chipping nuggets of the metal from the stones, testing them with his mysterious little bottle and slipping them into his gourd. All at once Gorges struck his hand to his head and his face became radiant.

"Speakin' o' fools," said he, "'t seems now we were all fools but thou, and I the worst fool of all. By the lord, boy! Thou hast struck it!"

Next moment he had seized up two pieces of the ore and begun to pound them together, seeking to break out the fragments of metal alone.

"An' to think we did this same thing and shot the stuff at apes and waterfowl when, if there'd been any wit in our wooden heads, we could ha'——"

He broke off and began to pour the golden bits into his powder flask, the contents of which he had recklessly poured overboard. Butshead grinned, but himself did nothing. Gorges eyed him suspiciously.

"Happen thou wantest none thyself?" said he.

"I have enough," was the reply, "and 'twould seem that more than enough has proved the undoing of us all."

"Aye, aye. Thou art right," said Gorges. "But bear a hand—there's a good lad—and help me to fill up. Eh, but thou art the right smart lad, thou art! Help me get this horn an' my shot-flask filled up. Then over the side wi' the rest an' we'll be going. Eh, lad? An' 'twill be our secret. They'll never suspeck there's aught in our flasks but powder an' shot an' 'twill be a fat nest-egg when we come to London Town. Bear me a hand, lad!"

BUTSHEAD, still with a curious half-grin on his face, willingly obliged. For two hours thereafter, while the sun rose upon the new day, the immediately surrounding jungle resounded with the hammering and cracking of the two men reducing the ore to bits from which they selected chips and particles of yellow and stowed them into Gorges' flasks. As the work proceeded Gorges' spirits rose and ever he burst out with the same jubilation—

"Aye, but thou art a smart lad wi' a sound head on thy shoulders!"

Once or twice when Gorges struck out a piece of solid metal too large to put in the flasks he shoved it into a pocket of his dress. Then, when his pockets would hold no more and he feared their bulge would betray him to his fellows of the *Fearless*, he emptied them again, throwing the stuff overboard with many a curse or groan.

"Stick to the little stuff! Stick to the little stuff!" he muttered, but it was easy to see it turned his heart sick to abandon even one morsel of the gold.

At last the job was done. The flasks were filled. More than that, Gorges knew he did not dare to carry if the scheme was to escape the knowledge of the men of the *Fearless*. Gorges' eyes were wild and sweat ran off his face when the moment came for the next step. It was Butshead who set the example. With both hands he began to shovel the remaining ore overboard. Gorges, with a burst of profanity that seemed born of a tortured soul, followed his example.

When half of the ore was overboard Gorges relented.

"Maybe she'll float now," said he. "There's no sense in throwing away more'n we have to. We might yet win out with some of it. Let's give 'er a heave, lad."

They stepped out into the shallows and tried, but still the boat was hard and fast. Again they resumed their labor of pitching the ore into the river alongside the boat. The rapids running over it were now tinged with sunlight that made the sunken metal gleam and twinkle from the bottom sands. The sight was torture to Gorges.

"Hold on, lad," said he suddenly. "Thou'rt not the only one as has a head on his shoulders. Let's make the boat fast lest she gets away from us. Then, when she's adrift, happen we may take some of the gold aboard again."

He did not wait for Butshead's comment but got out the boat's painter and made it fast to the nearest mangrove root. Then, chuckling at his own foresight, he again helped Butshead to throw the ore

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over the side, taking care now to drop it where the rapids were but knee-deep.

At last the lightened boat shifted slightly. At the same time there came from the river close at hand that sound as of a rotten tree-trunk collapsing from a bank. But neither heeded it. Overboard they jumped and laid hands upon the gunwale.

"Heave-o!" yelled Gorges, and at the third heave the ship's boat broke free of the gripping mud.

Almost instantly it was caught by the outer current. But for Gorges' lucky forethought for recovering some of the ore the craft would have been swept down the stream, leaving them in a worse predicament than ever. As it was, the boat escaped their hands and only brought up with a jerk on the painter made fast to the mangrove. On this leash it swung up against the bank of the silt island.

With a wild yell of alarm both men dashed out of the shallows on to the tip of the island and grabbed the straining painter. For the moment the gold was forgotten. That boat was worth all the treasure of the world.

Gorges wiped the sweat from his face, turned a rather blank face upon Butshead, then grinned his relief.

"Eh, lad, but that was a shave for us!" he gasped.

Presently avarice seized him again. They had accomplished what they had planned. The narrow margin by which they had escaped death by abandonment in that rotten swamp was forgotten, at least by Gorges.

"Now, lad," said he, "s'pose we load her up again."

But Butshead, still shaken, would have none of it.

"Load her again?" he cried angrily. "Hast thou not learned a fool's lesson already? Load her up and in an hour, if not less, we'll be aground again and have to jettison the cursed stuff all over. Man, but art thou not satisfied that thou carryest enough to fatten your own purse? Wilt thou risk thy life and mine again to bring out the ore than will be but for other's pockets?"

"Aye, aye," said Gorges soothingly, "but just enough—thou seest, lad—to let them see we ain't lying; just enough to diddle them about what we got stowed secret. 'Twill satisfy them that we're tellin' truth."

"By the Lord—no!" Butshead flared.

"By the Lord—aye!" snarled Gorges and he laid his hand on the butt of the mate's own pistol which he carried at his belt. "Eh, lad," he went on coaxingly, "thou an' I must ha' no quarrel now."

"I suppose," said Butshead with contempt, "there'll be no quarrel if y' are allowed your own way. Well—have it and be —— to you!"

"Aye, aye," said Gorges pleasantly. "I knew thou didst have a right clear head on thy shoulders. Let's to work then—only a handful or so for luck and to diddle them."

They turned to the shallows and prepared to wade in after the sunken treasure. But just as Gorges was about to put his foot in the water he started back with a gasp of terror.

"Look!" he whispered. "What's them?"

Butshead peered past his shoulder at the rapids where the gold ore danced sparkling under the twinkling waters. Lying across the bed of shimmering stuff was a long black body, which squirmed slightly, then lay as still as a log.

"There's another!" whispered Butshead. "There! Look! And another!"

"Lordamighty! They're all around!"

They were. Even as they looked, other black logiike things glided in from the deeper waters and came to a swaying stop over the bed of gold. And all the heads pointed in one direction—toward the two men.

"*Lagartos!* Alligators!" and Butshead's voice shook, for in that moment he thought of Fergus and Scroop.

Doubtless the reptiles had assembled. . . .

Strangely enough, in all their recent travels on the river they had encountered none of these "ugly serpents," as Raleigh described them, or, seeing them adrift in the river, had mistaken them for logs. But Butshead recalled with a shudder how in his first voyage he had seen with his own eyes a native guide seized and drawn under by one of them.

Again the value of gold became a trivial thing, even to Gorges. To the imaginative youth it was as if the Orinoco, having recovered some of its ravished treasure, sent out of its mysterious depths these evil monsters to guard it. There they lay with claw-armed feet outspread over the shimmering mass, their tight-closed, sneering mouths and evil eyes leering and gleaming at them.

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With a gasp Gorges turned and seized the painter of the boat. Only a width of two feet of water lay between the craft and the bank, yet the men leaped clear of it as if even there lurked danger. Once in the boat Gorges drew his hanger and wildly hacked at the rope. The boat, freed, shot out into the current with a suddenness that threw them off their feet.

It was a fortunate circumstance, for even as they fell into the bottom of the craft there came a mighty swirl of water and a ponderous tail struck across the gunwale. The blow seemed to loosen the timbers.

It was a pale and shaken pair who presently recovered nerve enough to take up the sweeps and keep the boat clear of further grounding in that deadly vicinity. The craft shot on, greatly lightened and, drawing less water, much easier of management.

SINCE they entered the delta they had abandoned all travel by night, fearful of losing their sense of direction entirely and of inevitable grounding at every fork. That day they made good progress toward the northeast, resolutely working the boat into every open channel that bore in that direction.

At night one slept while the other watched where the boat was lightly grounded or made fast by the edge of the mangroves. Gorges seemed to have no further fear of Butshead taking vengeance for the death of Fergus, and the young mate himself had no thought of any overt requital. Dissimilar as they were in every respect, these two men were for the time bound to each other by a common tie—love of life.

Still as they forged down this stream and that the jungle on either side and the view at each turn and twist of the bending channels presented the same monotonous, discouraging aspect. But for the swirl of the waters by the boat's sides they might well have believed they made no progress at all. And by now both were weak from exhaustion and starvation, while the fever of the delta burned and roared in their dazed brains.

They entered a more open river one day. For hours the boat had drifted rapidly down the central current. So wide was the stream that there was little need to use the sweeps for steerage, and so exhausted were both men that they were all but unable to wield them. The boat shot on, now bow first, now stern first, and again broadside, but ever held to its course by the current.

Gorges and Butshead lay almost inert in the bottom of the boat. Both were emaciated, for they had eaten nothing in days. Only the blessed plenteousness of water saved them from the added tortures of thirst.

All at once Butshead sat up and sniffed the air.

"I smell smoke!" said he, hoarsely.

Gorges pulled himself up to the gunwale and stared ahead. The river had suddenly widened considerably and to their ears came a far roaring accompanied by a grateful breeze. The latter swept the taint of burning wood from the air and brought another odor which Gorges was quick to recognize.

"Dickon! Dickon, lad!" he cried. "We're saved. I smell the sea!"

There could be no doubt of it when, a few minutes later, they saw the ocean, a blue floor and a short strip of horizon-rim cutting across the view ahead.

But where were they? Out of which of the scores of river mouths that formed the delta were they emerging? To their left the river curved into a bay. Beyond that was a headland, or possibly an island. About this outpointing of land there was something strangely familiar, but other landmarks which should have accompanied it were missing.

The jungle was cleared somewhat on the beach of the curving bay. Behind a thin belt of trees there arose a thin mist of blue smoke. Presently the blackened, charred ribs of a native hut appeared. Then it was that Gorges and Butshead stared at one another with hope and dismay fighting in their minds.

"Dickon!" said Gorges in a hoarse whisper, "It looks like Caribana's village, but——"

"It's Macuregai," said Butshead out of a thick throat. "I know that head. It's the island that hides the village from the sea. The channel's behind it."

Laboriously they took up the sweeps and with almost their last strength worked the boat to the left. Slowly they brought her nearer the beach of the small bay to a point where they could look down the channel.

They were no longer in doubt about where they were. They had returned, mostly by sheer luck, to their very starting-point.

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But something had happened in the meantime.

There was no sign of a native, or a native *canoa* on the beach. Smoke rose from the place where Caribana's village had stood.

And the *Fearless* had vanished.

CHAPTER XXV

THE OPEN BOAT

THEY poled the ship's boat ashore and landed. Not until then was their physical weakness wholly apparent to themselves. Their legs, cramped from long days in the boat, all but gave way under them.

They were dazed by this latest and crowning misfortune, so dazed that Butshead at least was filled with a sense of utter indifference to anything but the thought of food. The ship was gone; how, when and where mattered little for the moment. Even if Caribana and all his vindictive tribe had awaited them behind that belt of trees, they would have risked instant murder if only first they might alleviate their gnawing hunger.

But Caribana and his people of Macuregai had vanished as completely as the *Fearless* and the nine white men who had remained aboard her with Captain Barbary. This the two survivors discovered when, staggering weakly through the belt of trees and into the clearing where the village had stood, they found nothing but charred ribs of native huts and a general smoking ruin.

Here and there on the ground lay long dark objects that at once arrested the attention of Gorges and Butshead. They appeared to be bodies roasted by the recent conflagration. Whether they were of men or animals they could not at first decide. The air was pregnant with a maddening odor of baked flesh.

Butshead examined the nearest of these roasted objects. It was the body of a man, whether Indian or white it was impossible to determine. He turned away with a sick faintness, a sudden, strange horror chasing from his fevered brain the mad thought that had momentarily entered there.

But—food. He must have food. Wildly he gazed around the edge of the open space to where the fire-swept area was checked by the rank, green jungle. In the clearing there might have been fruit trees at one time, but the flames had left only a number of leafless gaunt trunks with charred branches. Near the edge of the jungle, nevertheless, Butshead espied a tree which the flame had not touched, but only smoke and heat. Its leaves hung dead and from its branches drooped a number of yellowish spheres.

Not knowing, not caring, what the fruit might be, save that it was possible food, he staggered forward, plucked one of the spheres and bit into it. It was warm and pulpy but pleasing to the taste. Madly he filled his hands with what were simply roasted guavas and reeled back toward Gorges, for in his weakness he was unable to call to him.

Gorges was acting strangely. He was on his knees beside one of the charred bodies. As Butshead came up behind him he observed that the mutineer had a naked knife in his hand.

For a moment Butshead did not realize the significance of that knife and the curious animal crouch of Gorges' attitude. The mate's eyes were upon a blackened square of metal attached to a charred strip of leather surrounding the middle of the body. It was the buckle of a belt and Butshead had seen that buckle before.

"It's Barbary!" he said huskily.

Gorges looked up at him. In his eyes there was a bestial glare and his right hand twitched over the knife hilt.

"Aye," he snarled: "Barbary or one of the others. Leastways—he's white!"

But for the strange madness in Gorges' eyes Butshead would have thought that the other was merely stating a fact. But that glare—the knife. . . .

"White—aye!" he gasped. "And so are you, Gorges—so are you! Thou wouldst not——"

"—— thee for a white-livered fool!" hissed Gorges. "It won't be the first time. An' what's the difference? Who's to know? Don't ye meddle wi' me, or by the Lord I'll——"

The look in the man's face told Butshead that, unarmed as he was, he was helpless to combat the beast instinct that was rampant in the other. Faint with horror and weakness, he turned and went blindly toward the boat. There upon the beach he fell upon his face, overcome by many physical and mental emotions. Within himself the animal gnawed with doubled craving.

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Presently he sat up with an effort and forced himself to gulp down mouthfuls of the pulpy guavas. Their slight acidity appeased his craving somewhat and engendered thirst. He crawled to the edge of the water and drank deeply. Then he rolled over, the ripples of the stream lapping his fevered temple, and either fainted or fell asleep from exhaustion.

. . . . .

HE WAS aroused by Gorges touching him with his foot. He sat up and looked dazedly at his companion. Instantly the memory of that scene in the clearing returned. He noticed that Gorges averted his eyes.

"Let's get away from here!" said the man hoarsely.

"Aye," echoed Butshead in a low voice. "Let's get away from here."

He felt somewhat revived. Gorges, on the other hand, seemed to have developed almost a feverish energy. He walked rapidly to and fro on the sand, his hands and the muscles of his face twitching oddly. Butshead wondered if the other's eagerness to get away was due to a horror of the spot—or of himself.

Suddenly Gorges threw himself on his knees by the water's edge and began to drink deeply. With a shiver the mate turned away and went back to the guava tree in the clearing. He gathered more of the half-baked fruit and returned to the boat without once glancing toward the spot where he had seen the belt-buckle.

Gorges was already in the boat, sitting with his head in his hands. He started and tried to seem indifferent as Butshead reappeared. But not once did he allow the younger man's gaze to meet his. His manner reminded Dickon of the guilty air of a dog that has returned to its kennel after a night of sheep-worrying. Butshead again drank deeply from the river, then said—

"We'd better carry water."

"We got nothing to carry it in," said Gorges, " 'less we empty out the gold. No need, anyway," he went on in a muttering way. "We're but a few leagues from Trinidad. We can work the boat through the Serpent's Mouth in a couple of hours and maybe make our peace with the Spaniards—diddle 'em somehow—tell 'em about the gold mountain and the way to it?"

To Butshead it seemed the choice of two evils; to leave that burned village and its unnamable horror, or throw themselves upon the mercy of Ximenes and his Spaniards. Yet the Spaniards, after all, were Europeans. They might spare them for the knowledge they brought of the route to that El Dorado which the descendants of old Gonzalez de Ximenes had so long sought in vain.

Without another word they pushed off the boat. A few minutes later the stream of the Orinoco, which extended far out to sea, was carrying them rapidly from the land. Butshead drew a deep breath as the tang of the sea-breeze filled his lungs.

Gorges, too, seemed to find relief in getting away from the scene of his brute madness. But still he kept his eyes away from Butshead's. He sat with his back to him, plying his sweep in the effort to keep the boat heading in the direction of the Serpent's Mouth, which was now clearly visible to the northwest.

But they had reckoned quite without their weakness and the fact that the current of the river bore them relentlessly almost due north. In a little while it was clear that, not only could they not possibly make the entrance to the almost land-locked bay of Puerto de los Españoles, but that they would be borne past the eastern end of the island altogether and carried out to open sea.

FOR hours they toiled madly at the sweeps, but their efforts were as straws against the solid bore of the river current. To make further impossible their desired haven a breeze set up in the afternoon and bore their small craft still farther to the east.

And the avarice of Gorges had chosen that the flasks be filled with yellow gold instead of fresh water.

When dusk came the shores of Trinidad were diminishing far to the west. They had long abandoned the sweeps. They were at the mercy of wind and current. Night came, starry above but densely dark on the face of the waters. The boat drifted on aimlessly.

The silence was broken only by a curious, mirthless ripple of laughter from Butshead and an occasional muttering from Gorges. Something terrible seemed to be hanging upon the latter's mind. Over and over

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in the seeming endless night Butshead, himself light-headed, thought he heard his companion repeating with a kind of defiant whine:

"It ain't the first time—not the first time! And he was a white man anyway——"

WHEN morning came Butshead dimly realized that Gorges was not in his right mind. Shortly after that, as the sun rose and began to blaze upon his unsheltered body, the mate himself was drifting from consciousness.

As in a dream he found himself wondering what had happened to the *Fearless*, to Captain Barbary and his handful of men and to Caribana, his people and his village.

That Barbary and his men had landed and mingled with the Macuregai was clear. Possibly Caribana, returning in a rage from the island of women warriors, had wreaked his fury upon the whites, killing them to the last man.

But that would not account for the burning of Caribana's own village, the complete disappearance of its people and the evanishment of the ship.

Had he known of Taruma's message to Caribana, commanding as overlord that the white men be spared until he sent further word, Butshead might have been still more puzzled.

The solution, or a possible solution, came to his half-crazed brain after a while. It was the work of Ximenes and his *soldados* from Puerto de los Españoles. Probably they had mustered a larger force and followed in the course of the *Fearless*. Coming upon it at anchor in the channel and undermanned, they had attacked and captured it, after which they had engaged, or been compelled to defend their prize against their ancient foe, the Macuregai.

Whether Barbary and his men had fought with the natives against the common enemy, whether some of the whites had been carried off to the Spanish town of Trinidad, or whether all had been annihilated except such of the natives as escaped to the jungle, Butshead was never to learn.

Presently he was unable to think and was lulled into sleep or unconsciousness by the muttering of Gorges, who sat wide-eyed and staring in the bow of the boat, his two flasks of gold gripped between his knees.

Another night watched the boat and the two survivors of the dance of the golden gods drift further out into the landless waste.

The mystery of the *Fearless* presented food for speculation to others besides Butshead who, unconscious in an open boat, had ceased to worry about it. But when Captain Yonge of the *Cygnet*, of Drake's fleet, picked up Gorges and Butshead about seventy miles to the east of Barbados two days later, the English captain believed that he saw a connection between that circumstance and another.

The *Cygnet* was returning to England, bearing the news that the mighty Drake was dead and buried in the waters off Porto Bello. The fact that the most powerful foe of the Spaniards was dead had further embittered the English against the exulting dons. Yonge and his company decided for one last blow at the Spanish Empire before finally clearing these waters.

Sailing into the bay of Puerto de los Españoles they attacked and burned the Spanish capitol of Trinidad. After the fight, which was waged mainly around the governor's palace, the body of Doña Pia was found among others with a native arrow in her heart.

But the mystery of that woman's killing did not interest Drake's men as did the circumstance of an English vessel, the *Fearless*, at anchor in the bay. That she was English everything about her, and in her, made clear, but there was not a man aboard to supply any further information. The conclusion to which Captain Yonge came was that she had been captured by the Spanish and every soul aboard her put to death, for none of the English race had been found on the island.

Manned by a prize crew, the *Fearless* was sailing in company with the *Cygnet* when the drifting boat was espied two days later. In the boat were found two men, one a lad who was unconscious from exhaustion, thirst and fever, the other a grizzled, elderly man whom the *Cygnet's* surgeon, Dr. Martin, found to be insane.

On the stern of the boat was painted the name, *Fearless*.

Butshead and Gorges were brought aboard the *Cygnet*, which then proceeded toward England with the *Fearless* following. The surgeon and the captain were both filled with curiosity to learn the tale of that empty vessel in the bay of Trinidad and to

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connect the link between it and the two castaways in the open boat.

Their curiosity was further aroused by the behavior of Gorges and his strange babble, to say nothing of the fact that through all his madness he clung to two weighty flasks which were slung about his shoulders. He hugged them to his breast and became more violent when any approached him. In the surgeon's discretion it was decided not to meddle with them.

Butshead, on the other hand, was passive in unconsciousness and Captain Yonge found another link in the chain of probabilities when, upon investigation, he found that the gourd slung to the younger man's shoulder was filled with a yellow metal which the surgeon declared pure gold.

"I'll make a wager," said Yonge upon this discovery, "that they are Raleigh's men. 'Tis in my mind that what time we left Plymouth he had made report of finding a vast gold mine and was planning, with the queen's favor, a second expedition into Guiana. God help Sir Walter if this is all that survives of his company.

"But see you to it, Martin," he added with humane generosity. "Fetch these two poor devils back to life, so they may enjoy what little profit they ha' sweated out o' suffering. Another might seize the stuff, but not I or any aboard an honest ship!"

Dr. Martin, a philosopher in his way, was studying the gleaming stuff which he had trickled out of the gourd on to the palm of his hand. The physician had watched by the side of many a man whose blood had been spilled on the altar of this yellow god. Himself almost indifferent to it—partly by the viewpoint his profession engenders—he had witnessed through years and ever with a growing pity and marvel, agony, madness, fire, rapine and death attending in the train of this god, which was merely a thing set up by men as an idol no less earthy than themselves.

"Gold," he said in a quiet, curious voice.

"Frozen blood. Flame turned to stone. Hell's currency."

The ship's surgeon slowly trickled the gleaming particles back into the gourd, then turned to the unconscious youth in the hammock and laid merciful physician hands upon him.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MOCKER OF MEN

ABOUT five weeks later there was great excitement in Plymouth Town—excitement in which marvel, sorrow and great joy were mingled.

First had come into that port of Devon, from which so many hopes had sailed against the Spaniard, one of Drake's ships, the *Cygnet*, bringing news of triumphs over the dons on the Main but also with word of the mighty warrior's death at Porto Bello.

But while the church bells of Drake's native port were still tolling, another ship sailed into the harbor and fired a salute which had a note of victory in it. Presently the gloom occasioned by Drake's death was somewhat lessened by the news from this second ship. It was the *Water Sprite*, commanded by Sir Walter Raleigh.

The *Water Sprite*, like the *Cygnet*, brought both good and bad tidings. Under the Earl of Essex, but mainly by Raleigh's heroism and enterprise, the Spanish fleet had been defeated at Cadiz and the town taken. Raleigh himself was severely wounded in the leg.

The entire population of Plymouth thronged the water's edge to see and cheer the wounded hero as he was brought ashore on a litter from the *Water Sprite*. At the vast acclaim of bells and voices Raleigh raised himself upon his elbow, smiled despite his pain, and waved a hand in the manner of a returning conqueror who acknowledges the triumph accorded him by the populace.

Suddenly the smile gave place to an expression of wonder, which slowly changed to intense interest. Over the shoulders of the crowd that pressed about him he saw a face—the face of a youth—burned to swarthiness but thin with suffering. For a moment Raleigh was in doubt, but with the meeting of eyes came recognition. It was young Butshead—alive, and by his appearance returned from Heaven alone knew—though Raleigh instantly surmised—what sufferings in that unauthorized voyage to Guiana.

For a few moments their eyes held together. Raleigh read in Butshead's face that he desired an interview and the young adventurer read in Raleigh's glance that

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he wished for the same. Then they lost sight of one another. While the bells of Plymouth clashed and the sons of Devon acclaimed their idol, Raleigh was borne to the most comfortable room in the best inn and attended by several physicians, among whom was Dr. Martin of the *Cygnet*.

As soon as Sir Walter was refreshed by sleep Dr. Martin, seizing the opportunity when he alone was on watch by the bedside, said to the patient:

"My curiosity gets the better of me, sir. We of the *Cygnet* had thought you dead somewhere in Guiana, inasmuch as we picked up two of your former crew in an open boat—the only survivors of a ship's company that ascended the Orinoco in your name and in search of the famous El Dorado of the Spaniards."

"Ha!" said Raleigh with the keenest interest. "One only of that rascally company was friend to me, and I would fain have a word with him. Should a lad calling himself Dickon Butshead ask after my welfare, see that he is admitted. But in the meantime, tell me more of these survivors, and how they fell in the way of the *Cygnet*."

Dr. Martin told what he knew. The men had been in a serious condition when rescued, the younger being unconscious and the elder, a hoary rascal named Gorges, quite mad for a time.

"Gorges," muttered Raleigh. Then he remembered and frowned. "That dog! The greatest pirate unhung! What lies did he tell of himself and his doings?"

But Dr. Martin had little more to relate, save that both men carried gourds and flasks crammed with gold which they must have been at great pains to separate laboriously from the rock. He had examined the metal himself from the younger man's calabash and knew it to be gold of the purest. The elder man, Gorges, had carried twice as much of the stuff, but owing to the jealous madness of the man the doctor had refrained from touching it. Once Gorges all but leaped overboard with his treasure hugged to his breast when the doctor tried to separate him from it in order to minister to his sickness.

The two castaways, continued the *Cygnet's* surgeon, had recovered very quickly, although he still believed that the man Gorges was somewhat affected in his mind. He kept to himself, was suspicious of all who approached him, had periods of brooding and muttering, as if some terrible memory haunted him, and at no time did he put from his shoulders the two weighty flasks that were slung to them.

The younger man, Dickon, was different. A bright youth, said the surgeon; but although he told a strange tale he was oddly reticent about some details of it. He had said later, however, that Raleigh was not with the expedition, although he had had a hand in it.

For the rest, young Butshead, as soon as he was well and about the ship, devoted all his time to the study of navigation under Captain Yonge, who had taken a great fancy to the lad.

It was just then that the host of the inn entered on tiptoe and whispered something to the surgeon. His manner was apologetic, as if he expected a rebuff.

" 'E said as 'ow if I brought 'is name, sir, 'e would be made welcome most like, and fearing, sir, that to turn 'im off would vex Sir Walter——"

The surgeon cut him off with a wave of his hand and rose to his feet. To Raleigh he said with a laugh:

"Here, sir, is your young mystery demanding entrance. Bring him up, Landlord, and—" to Raleigh, with an admonitory wag of his forefinger—"I give ye but five minutes."

The surgeon and the landlord withdrew. Presently there entered by the door upon which Raleigh's eyes were eagerly fixed—Dickon Butshead.

He was dressed in clothes that had been given him aboard the *Cygnet* in place of the rags he had worn when brought aboard unconscious. His face still told a tale of terrible privation, but at sight of Sir Walter that face broke out in a broad smile. He came to a halt by the bedside, saluted his idol, then held out a weighty gourd, part of the contents of which he shook out into the hand that Raleigh extended in greeting.

"From El Dorado, sir," he said simply.

"I was there."

For a moment Raleigh stared at the gleaming bits in his hand. His quick eye knew them for the true metal at once. Then his gaze lifted to Butshead's.

"Tell me everything," he said.

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WHEN the tale was told—and the adventurous knight would brook no interruption, even from the surgeon—Sir Walter Raleigh's face was a study of wonder, admiration, and not a little satisfaction. Yet as he heard of the mad adventurers, their boats laden with ore, their successive disasters brought about by lust of liquor and gold, their fate one by one until but two of the original thirty-two who had sailed from Plymouth survived, his countenance was moved by a great pity.

"Poor fools!" he said, half to himself. "Evil as they were, I admire their bravery in the face of odds. English to the core, lad—English hearts for all their madness. With a strong command what might not they have accomplished?

"So?" he went on musingly. "They are all dead, save Gorges—and possibly Sparrow and Godwin. I ha' no fears, lad, for their safety under Taruma. He will hold them against my coming. And come there we will, lad—you and I—and you shall be at my right hand. Together with a goodly company we shall recover the mine, enrich ourselves and her Majesty and add to the English dominion the new empire I discovered."

As Dr. Martin, anxious for his distinguished patient, was becoming importunate, Raleigh rapidly gave his instructions for Butshead's further conduct.

"Go ye to London, brave lad," he said, gripping Butshead's hand firmly in his. "Take this gold to Master Palmer of the Mint, who has ever been true to my interests while his rivals of Wood Street conspired with Essex to defraud me. Bid him—for me—assay this metal and cast it into one solid ingot. The worth of this I shall pay to you out of my own monies, keeping the ingot as proof that my mine is no dream, my Guiana no outpouring of a poetic wish father to a romantic dream.

"Until such time as the queen her Majesty favors the new expedition I plan, you shall serve me aboard the *Sprite* in our further war against the dons. For a time, fare thee well, good Dickon. Seek me out when my wound is well and I shall make a man of thee, though from thy bearing—thou needest but little help to that end."

AFTER leaving the inn, Butshead, aglow with pride and the promise for the future held out in Raleigh's words, went in search of Gorges who, for reasons of his own, he did not wish to see the last of yet.

As he had fully anticipated, he discovered the man in one of the taverns near the waterfront, firing his already half-crazed brain with liquor. When Butshead entered the ill-smelling place he found Gorges surrounded by an open-mouthed knot of sailors and landsmen, who were listening to a strange tale of a region where the rocks were solid gold and the natives ate and drank from pots and plates of pure yellow metal.

On the liquor-stained table at which Gorges sat drinking and holding forth in a crazed voice, was spread a mass of nuggets which he had poured from his powder-and-shot flasks.

"Aye!" cried Gorges, catching sight of Butshead. "And here be one as can add word for word to the truth of what I tell ye. Ahoy there, Dickon, m'lad!"

Butshead did not return his greeting with the same cordiality. Instead he shouldered his way into the circle, gathered up the nuggets and put them back into the flasks. With difficulty he got Gorges out of the place and convinced him of his folly.

"What wouldst thou, thou long-tongued fool?" said he. "We are still many a league from London Town and we must even walk it, having no means to post. Wouldst thou tempt Providence and thieves by the road that thou flauntest thy treasure in the eyes of Tom, Dick and Harry?"

This served to bring Gorges to his senses, and presently he was all agog to be on the high road. They left Plymouth without being molested. Butshead was anxious for his own treasure, but hoped that little notice had been taken of Gorges' indiscretion. Plymouth was full of sailors whose pockets were lined either with the gold of the Main or loot from the sacked Cadiz, but for the most part they did not display it recklessly. Gorges had done so and eyes had gloated. Butshead looked to the priming of his pistol and bade Gorges do likewise.

It came about as he expected. That night they were attacked by five men who sprang from the roadside not ten miles out of Plymouth. Butshead, who had held himself in readiness, shot and killed one man even as he cried "Stand and deliver!" A second he engaged with his hanger, and sent him howling into the ditch with a

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half-severed right arm. Then he turned to assist Gorges, who was fighting three men at once with all the fury of a desperate maniac.

One of his opponents Gorges brought to the ground either dead or mortally wounded The other two would-be robbers, facing an equal match, retreated suddenly. At that, Butshead and Gorges, courting no further peril of losing their treasure, took to their heels.

Half a mile they ran. Then Gorges brought up his companion with a yell that had something of a wail of despair in it.

"It's gone!" he fairly yammered. "One o' them's gone—cut clean from my shoulder."

Investigation proved that the thong by which one of the metal-filled flasks was suspended had either broken, or been cut through in the fight. Half of Gorges' blood-and-sweat-bought treasure was gone —either in the hands of one of the robbers or scattered on the highway.

Overcome with miser agony and to think that he had brought the stuff through such passes only to lose it so near the goal, Gorges sank down on the road and mingled curses with wild, unmannish hysteria. Butshead stood near him, his arms folded and his gaze lifted to the stars. In that moment—but only for the moment—his heart pitied Gorges.

But then he remembered Fergus—and Barbary—and a lot of other things—and his heart hardened.

THREE days later the adventured pair entered London Town. Even as a man who has lost most of a fortune may yet reconcile himself with what remains of it, Gorges had recovered some of his spirit. He calculated that the contents of the laden flask that was still his would at least feather his nest and keep his abiding thirst quenched until fortune smiled again.

Butshead's heart beat with a curious elation, a fierce joy of anticipated requital for the miseries of his boyhood, as they approached the shop of the goldsmith in dingy Rat Lane. He wondered what his precious uncle would presently have to say. How would he look when . . .

Master Simons appeared from his cubby-hole workshop in the rear as the door of the front shop slammed behind the two who entered.

"Dickon! Gorges!" squeaked the gray rat of Rat Lane. "B' th' Lord, I had about given ye up for dead! What news? What luck? What d'ye bring? Did ye find it?"

"Aye," said Butshead, eying him coolly. "We found it—a mountain of gold. El Dorado, too. And we filled our boats to the gunwale with ore and——"

"Not here! Not here!" whispered Master Simons, wringing his hands in anticipation and radiant with avarice. "Come into the back shop. We must keep the secret. Remember the Crown. They'd claim a fifth. Eh, but thou'rt the smart lad! I knew thou wert!"

The goldsmith closed and barred the door of the little back room and sat down at the table, grinning and leering in anticipation of a feast.

"There, now! We can talk," said he. "Where's the stuff? O' course ye could na' carry it. Aboard the ship—hey? Ye ha' left it well-guarded by them as will keep their mouths shut—hey? But, there! One thing at a time. Ye came away with it! That's enough to start with. Tell me everything from the beginning, and then we will summon our friends—Bulmar and Master Fox and the alderman."

It was Butshead who told the story from beginning to end, while Gorges sat with an alert gleam in his eyes and his two hairy hands gripping his precious flask.

Master Simons fidgeted impatiently over the first part of the story. What cared he how many were killed by Spaniards, or snakes, or fever, or poisoned arrows? He was anxious to come to the gold. And when Butshead brought the adventurers to the shining mountain and described how there was more of the ore than all the queen's navy could carry off, the goldsmith's eyes bulged and his face shone with the joyous sweat of his excitement.

He shook with terror at hearing of the gold-hunters' capture by the Indians, but again his fears were dispelled at hearing of their deliverance from El Dorado. He fairly leaped from his stool as his nephew described how the Indians filled the boats so that they were like to sink under their cargo of precious metal.

The first real shock came to Master Simons when Butshead, speaking as coolly as if the matter were unimportant, told of the loss of five men in the fight off Taruma's town.

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"But the boat! The load of gold ore?" squeaked the goldsmith.

"Oh—we lost that," said Butshead lightly. "It went to the bottom right there."

If ever agony was imprinted on a man's face, reflected from his very soul, it was on Master Simons' at news of this calamity. Gorges groaned at the memory and clutched his flask the tighter.

"An' mind ye," he said stolidly, "this is mine——"

Still, as Master Simons presently reflected, there was enough left in the other boat to provide a snug fortune—if there were not too many to share. And something might be secretly arranged about that. He feverishly bade Butshead continue.

His expression was a blank when the tale came to that part where the remaining boatload was thrown into the river. Butshead, who seemed to have no sense of other than story values, made more of the crocodiles than of the loss of the treasure. Master Simons tried to speak several times, but the words stuck in his throat. Then suddenly speech returned.

"But—but—" he stammered. "What meanest thou, lad? Of course ye recovered it when the brutes went away?"

"No, nunky," said Butshead coolly. "We were glad to come away with our lives. But ne'ertheless we provided ourselves with what we ha' brought, to show you—what might ha' been!"

"An' mind ye," chimed in Gorges fiercely, shaking his flask, "what's mine's mine!"

"Show it to him, Gorges," said Butshead with a malicious chuckle, while his uncle sat white and staring.

The goldsmith was trying to realize that for thousands of pounds spent, and—although this was a detail—thirty men's lives lost, the return was but a handful of what might or might not be his.

Gorges shook out of his flask a single piece of the yellow metal and, grinning like an ape, laid it cautiously on the table near Master Simons' twitching, scrawny hands. The goldsmith stared at it. Then force of habit took possession. He scurried into the cubby-hole, returning presently with his chemicals. He touched the yellow morsel with a little acid-moist feather and studied the metal closely. A light—a faint light—crept over the gray shadow of his face.

"Aye, aye!" he muttered. "'Tis gold—pure gold! Let me see some more."

Gorges, with the same cautious thrift, dropped another but smaller piece from his flask and strained forward as the goldsmith again applied the test. Suddenly Master Simons' jaw dropped and he turned a furious face upon his nephew.

"Thou fool!" he hissed. "This is no gold. 'Tis some base metal. Let me see the rest! Let me see the rest!"

Gorges, stunned by the possibility, weakly surrendered the flask, the contents of which the goldsmith poured out upon the table. Again the sweat broke out on his face as he applied the acid-moistened feather to the blinking, mocking nuggets. As he did so Butshead laughed and said:

"Aye, as thou sayest, nunky, 'tis base metal—all dross, except maybe a piece of true gold that got in by luck. 'Tis nothing but mother o' gold, sheep's gold, fool's gold! There's a whole mountain of it, nunky, but there's gold there, too—lots of it. Had Gorges and his crew had any knowledge or sense they would ha' known the difference as I did."

He shook the calabash which was still strung from his shoulder and rattled the contents in Master Simons' face.

"This is gold, nunky—pure gold—every speck of it tested. But, as Gorges says, nunky, what's mine's mine!"

He suddenly burst out laughing and unbarred the door, preparatory to going away. Neither man attempted to stay him. Gorges sat with a blank, stupefied stare fastened upon the worthless pyrites that littered the table. Master Simons was glaring at the single piece of true gold—no bigger than a hazelnut—which had met the test, and he shook as in a palsy or an oncoming fit.

"And pray thee, dear nunky," said Butshead, "pay my respects to the fat alderman and thy other friends and tell them it pays to be honest. And Gorges—tell nunky—it will amuse him—he always loved stories—how old King Guascar fooled you all. He and his people knew the difference between soft gold and brittle dross. So did the compass which went crazy near that mountain. And so did Butshead, thanks to his nunky and a Rat Lane apprenticeship!"

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With that, Butshead, having business to transact with Master Palmer of the Mint, turned on his heel and walked out, slamming the Rat Lane door after him for all time.

Behind him he left Master Simons and Gorges staring at the little mocking morsel of gold. The miser suddenly fell off his stool to the floor, where he lay writhing. Master Gorges paid no heed to the stricken old rat but suddenly began to mutter:

"He's white, anyway. It's been done before. Don't ye meddle with me, boy, or——"

CHAPTER XXVII

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

THROUGHOUT his career the touch of Sir Walter Raleigh was never that of Midas. That which he touched never turned to gold; rather, when he touched gold it turned to ashes.

For all the amazing luck that attended his career, there yet ran through the design a thread of misfortune which found its culmination in the last scene of his life. The vagaries of a coquet mistress, the jealousy of rivals, the hatred of King James for all that had been close to the murderer of his mother, the Scottish Mary, and the sinister bird of disaster that brooded over the Orinoco—all conspired against one of the bravest gentlemen that ever graced the pages of England's history of conquest.

As soon as the wound he had received at Cadiz was healed Raleigh again put to sea in the *Water Sprite*, and with him, as one of his younger captains, was Richard Butshead. Dickon fought by his master's side in the taking of Fayal in the Azores, which victory Raleigh's rival Essex took unto himself in his report to Elizabeth, never even mentioning Sir Walter's name.

In the meantime, a second edition of Raleigh's "Discovery of Guiana" had been issued and to it the adventurous knight had appended a counter to those rumors that what he had discovered in Guiana was nothing but a mountain of dross. He wrote:

In Guiana, all the rocks, mountains, all stones are in effect thorough-shining and appear marvelous rich; which, being tried to be no marcasite, are the true signs of rich minerals, but are no other than *el madre del oro*, which is mother of gold, or, as it is said by others, scum of gold. Of divers sorts of these many of my company brought also into England, every one taking the fairest for the best, which is not general.

Gold—true gold—was plentiful, however, Raleigh asserted. He had seen it with his own eyes and had brought back samples of it, the value of which had been overclouded by the malice of rivals and the confusion resulting from assays of the worthless fool's gold brought in quantity by ignorant members of his company.

The account of the "discovery," together with this added preface, aroused widespread interest. Many there were who asked why Elizabeth did not at once fit out Raleigh with a new expedition. But Elizabeth, as years destroyed her former beauty, became more jealous of its tributes. Either Raleigh was in high favor and she would not permit him to leave her side, or he was in disfavor, whereupon it was her amiable pleasure to consider him a charlatan and dreamer and lock him in the Tower of London, out of which he might occasionally extricate himself with a sonnet to her fast-falling eyebrows.

After her death the succeeding monarch, James, received Raleigh in audience. Before sending him to the Tower for twelve years, his unforgiving Majesty made the playful remark—

"Raleigh, I have heard rawly of thee!"

While his hero-idol spent year in and out in the Tower writing his "History of the World" and dreaming of that Guiana which seemed farther off than ever, Captain Richard Butshead scoured the seas as one of the many fearless seamen who made England mistress of the ocean, while he impatiently hoped for that day when King James' natural avarice might cause him to relent.

It was Butshead's ingot, which Raleigh used as a paperweight in the drafty Tower, that finally brought about his release. James hefted the ingot, which Raleigh had had brought to his Majesty by a trusty hand, and the king, without for a moment pardoning Sir Walter's offense—which was mainly that he had been a favorite of his mother's murderer—set him free upon a condition.

The condition, as all the world knows, was that he sail to Guiana, rediscover the gold mine and fetch back for the benefit of the Crown these riches which, Raleigh had declared in his written word, would make the English monarch richer than was ever

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the Grand Khan or the Spanish Philip with his golden Indies. And if Raleigh failed to make good, his head should be forfeit.

The rest is history. Again the golden gods of the Orinoco laughed in their sleeves and assembled the powers of evil that had guarded the Orinoco since the first Spaniard left his bones there.

With his son, Walter, his tried and trusted Captain Keymis of former expeditions and the ever-faithful Butshead, now a man in powerful prime, Raleigh sailed again in his sixty-fourth year—twenty years after the ill-fated voyage of the *Fearless*. But for that thread of misfortune which ran through the design of his fate, he must have succeeded, especially with the knowledge and guidance of Captain Butshead and the friendship of Taruma, King of Aromaia, did he still live.

But disasters piled on every hand. At the Canaries the English company fell afoul of the Spaniards, who had been informed by Philip of Raleigh's new attempt to reach El Dorado. Then mutiny broke loose on the high seas. One of the ships deserted and the rest battled against headwinds so long that, before the three peaks of Trinidad appeared, scurvy was raging and Raleigh himself was ill from long confinement in the Tower, together with age and anxiety.

He was unable himself to make the hazardous journey up the river, but sent his son, Walter, with Captain Keymis and Captain Butshead. They discovered that Morequito had been destroyed by the Spanish, Taruma slain and his people reduced to slavery. A new town, Sant' Tomas, had sprung up, and here Spaniard and Anglo-Saxon engaged in a pitched battle in which Walter Raleigh the younger was slain.

Discouraged by the loss of their admiral's son, they returned to the flag-ship. Raleigh urged them to a second attempt to reach that golden mountain where so much true gold lay mixed with its deceptive mother. But again they encountered the Spaniards, this time in ambush and reinforced by the Indians whom they had coerced into armed support. Out of this ambush the Anglo-Saxons came half-decimated and carrying a single prisoner, behind whose Indian disguise Butshead discovered the scrivener hostage, Francis Sparrow, who had saved his life from the Spaniards by adopting native dress. The map-maker Godwin had died of a fever years before.

Again Raleigh's men returned to the ship, and again Raleigh, still undaunted, inspired them to another effort. This third attempt carried no more luck, meeting indeed with final disaster. The season had grown late. The Orinoco came down in flood. Drenched with torrential rains and running short of food, half of the company died of exhaustion, starvation and fever. At last, when human endurance had found its limit, the survivors returned to the mouth of that fiendish river—beaten.

And the last tragedy but one over which the sinister deities of the Orinoco must have chuckled, was when stout Captain Keymis, who never before had known defeat, avoided the eyes of the broken Raleigh, retired to his cabin and turned upon himself the pistol which he said "had been loaded too long."

Then the ships sailed for England, bearing to his unjust doom a profound scholar and a brave gentleman, at whose side, even at the headsman's block, stood the lad of whom Raleigh had made a man and who was yet to do honor to his memory by his prowess on the high seas—Captain Richard Butshead.

So ended the dance of the golden gods.

THE END

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The Stronger Bond

by William H. Pope

WITHIN a roomy log cabin which squatted comfortably on the top of Tucker's Ridge two men were playing checkers on a rude, home-made board. They exchanged few words, merely grunting at a successful or disastrous move, as the case might be. Both chewed strong home-grown tobacco and spat unerringly at a hole in the floor. One was a man of about fifty, not large in frame as most men in that section, but he carried the difference in his hip pocket and was as tough as a pine-knot. A luxuriant sandy-colored beard almost concealed his face, and the grim eyes that peeped cautiously from beneath shaggy eyebrows added to his ferocious appearance.

The younger man was his son and gave promise of being a worthy successor to his father, inasmuch as his face, like that of his parent, bore the stamp of brutality which was enhanced by eyes of uncanny brightness that seemed to smolder with a subdued fire; but his body was splendidly developed and the brown hands with which he moved the little wooden disks gave a hint of the strength in the long arms.

The voices of women preparing supper in the kitchen, and the noise and clamor made by two or three children playing in the yard disturbed the game not one whit. The only break in the pastime came when the checker-men were rearranged for a new game, or when one of the players bit a fresh chew off a twist of tobacco.

"'Bout chore time, hain't hit?" asked the younger man without looking up.

"Dunno. Whar's the sun?"

The son arose and went to the window.

"'Bout a' hour high. Thar comes thet —— Jim Howell!" He turned quickly to his father.

"Let him have hit, 'Pink'," ordered the old man venomously. "He killed thet steer o' mine this mornin'."

Pink snatched a rifle and threw open the front door. Far down the trail that led up the pine-clad slope a man was coming briskly toward the cabin. Pink raised the rifle, drew a fine bead on the advancing figure, and fired.

"—— of a shot!" sneered the old man who watched the operation with deep interest. "Nuver come in a foot of him. Thar hain't no need in goin' arter him," he continued hastily as Pink started out the door with an oath. "He's a better shot than ye air!"

On the way to the barn the old man stopped in the kitchen and snarled at his girl, who was helping the mother get the evening meal.

"Yer man was a-comin' ter spark ye, but he nuver liked the welcome we 'uns gave him, an' he went back!"

"He ain't my man yet, pap, and I wish you wouldn't talk that way. He wasn't comin' to see me. He was comin' to pay for that steer he shot this morning."

The next instant she flushed and bent lower over the bread she was stirring, biting her lip in vexation.

"So ye seed him this mornin', hey?" barked her father, rattling the dishes on

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the table with a blow of his gnarled fist. "I 'lowed ye was mighty anxious to go over ter the Widow Crowley's fer some reason. Now, listen, gal, I'm a-goin' ter kill every cow he's got, an' if he don' like hit——"

He broke off and turned to the door as his youngest child, a boy of eight, ran in with a scream.

"Pap, oh, pap! Pink kicked me clear out'n the barn, an' I'm a-goin ter kill him, durn him. If he hits me ag'in I'm a-goin ter kill him!"

The youngster's eyes were ablaze with the fiery temper that was his birthright, and he looked expectantly at his father.

"Shut up," admonished the old man sympathetically, although he grinned appreciatively at his offspring. "Look thar, maw," he exclaimed with satisfaction. "That 'ere lad'll carve his own way, hey? Thar won't be none ter run over him, hey? Whut's up, Pink?" he inquired.

The latter had entered the kitchen, his face black with passion.

"Bill Turner was shot down to the Big Lake Forks," he announced shortly. "Joe Hooper just rid over an' told me. Found him 'bout noon. Some o' that Howell bunch done hit. Whut yer gonna do about it?"

"Do? Why ——!" roared his father. "Clean out the hull dum nest uv 'em! We'll do the work fust, then go over ter Luke's atter supper an' git the boys together."

He dashed to the barn in a fury and Pink followed slowly, a queer, unnatural expression on his gloomy face.

The girl, who had listened with throbbing heart to the exchange of words, flashed a quick glance at Pink and then at her father. Neither man observed the action, but when the girl turned again to her work, the eyes that stared unsecingly into the mixing-bowl were troubled and her hands shook with a sudden emotion.

THE sun had dipped below the western horizon of hills and a soft gloom was casting purple shadows in the pine thickets, when Jim Howell strode into his cabin on the crest of Flint Hill and placed his rifle in the corner of the room nearest the door. It was his unfailing rule to place the weapon in that particular spot so it would be convenient in case of emergency. In his own words, "a gun ain't worth havin' if it ain't to hand when you need it real bad," he preached and religiously practiced a platitude.

Not that Jim was of a belligerent nature. But the people in that section of the hill country still adhered to the customs of their fathers—the days of the fighting clans and age-old feuds while passing slowly and surely, were not yet extinct, and because of an ancient though not forgotton shooting-match between the founder of the house of Howell and an ancestor of old man Robbins, it was still considered necessary for members of each family to keep a weapon within reach in case the waning spark of hate should by any chance be suddenly fanned into life again.

Jim Howell and his kinsmen were quite willing to forgive and forget and enter upon the era of peace and quiet which Brother Baxter, the white-haired preacher from the Piney Creek settlement, was endeavoring to implant in the neighborhood; but the hard-working little mediator had not been able to drive the old spirit of animosity from the hearts and minds of old man Robbins and his venomous son Pink, although the daughter, Mayella, had been won over instantly.

Jim had always been sure of Mayella. The line of demarkation was too plainly drawn for them to meet openly, but the Widow Crowley's tiny, spick and span parlor offered a safe place for frequent talks, and the old lady's motherly heart was ever full of sympathy. It was due largely to the simple romance that Brother Baxter refused to become discouraged in his attempt to reconcile Robbins and his son to the régime of law and order and thus bring about friendlier relations between the two families.

Therefore it was disappointment and not anger or apprehension that clouded Jm's face as he moved about the kitchen fixing himself a bite to eat. Had any one else shot at him while he was going about on a peaceful mission he would have flamed into one of the famous passions which were a distinguishing mark of the Howell family and returned the shot with double interest; but Brother Baxter had sown the seed deep in Jim's heart, and that teaching together with a thought of Mayella had caused Jim to merely turn on his heel and go back to await a more propitious time for settling his indebtedness.

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He had finished his supper and was stuffing his pipe with tobacco when a young fellow rode up to the door and dismounted, hitching his mule to a post.

"Hyar, Jim," greeted the boy excitedly. "Look thar!"

He flung his slouch hat into Jim's lap for inspection.

"Been makin' a' air-hole in it, 'Bud'?" asked Jim whimsically, well knowing the cause of the gaping hole in the hat.

His heart sank with despair and lines of care appeared on his tanned face.

"Air-hole, ——!" spluttered the excited one. "Hit's a bullet hole that knocked it clean off my haid while I was comin' through Dene Hollow. I 'low Pink Robbins done hit, an' I a-gonna kill him!"

"You ain't gonna do nothin'," contradicted Jim, "until they start somethin'. That might of been a' accident. That hot head o' yourn'll turn the whole country upside down. Just wait a while."

"Aw, I know about Mayella bein' Pink's sis, all right; but he can't shoot my hat off if ——"

"Shut up!" Jim's voice was tense and he bit the words off savagely.

Bud jumped to is feet but Jim's hand on his shoulder reminded him that he was still a baby compared to his cousin, and he subsided into his chair with a snarl.

"But that hain't all," he argued. "Bill Turner was shot this mornin' down to the Big Lake Forks, an' everybody says Uncle Tobe done hit. Thar's gonna be a fight!"

He fired this shot with emphasis and leaned back triumphantly, watching his cousin's face keenly.

A muffled groan escaped Jim's tightly drawn lips. Bud took it for a grunt of anger and smiled confidently. His hot young blood was only too glad of the opportunity to prove his courage with the Robbinses whether along the wooded trails or in the open. In a way he wished he had been slightly wounded instead of having a hole bored through his hat, so that he could the better have stirred the blood of his relatives.

Again Bud looked sharply at Jim. Such silence on the eve of a probable battle was disquieting. The entire Howell family looked to Jim for advice and Bud had expected his cousin to sound an immediate call to arms, to prevent a Robbins from avenging the death of their kinsman on Uncle Tobe.

A fierce feeling of resentment surged through Jim's breast. He was aware of the bad blood existing between Tobe and Bill Turner, but why should his and Mayella's future be blotted because of a trivial grudge?

In that instant he saw clearly the utter senselessness of blindly following the leadership of a long-dead ancestor into a maze of bloodshed and violence over an affair that easily could have been settled peaceably. His heart went out in a surge of affection to Mayella, and he saw himself taking her from her family by force if necessary and going far away and founding a paradise in the wilderness in which law and order should reign.

Then his mind, casting about for a way out of the present dilemma, grasped an idea and began to shape it into a plan, when he was brought back to earth again by his cousin.

"Old man Robbins' steer still eatin' yer corn?" Bud was seeking a way to arouse Jim from his peculiar apathy regarding the imminent battle.

"No. I killed it this mornin'."

Jim did not think it necessary to inform Bud that he intended to pay for the animal and had been shot at in consequence thereof.

"An' he'll kill you, too, ef he gets a chance," Bud exclaimed, leaning forward and slapping Jim on the knee. "We air a-gonna clean 'em all up! Come on, let's git some o' th' boys together. Thar's gonna be a fight, I tell you—a big 'un!" The speaker left his chair and sprang on his mule. "Come on, ain't ye goin'?"

"No," answered Jim.

Lighting his pipe, he flicked the match out of the doorway and leaned back in his chair.

For a moment Bud sat still on his mule and gazed at his cousin in amazement. "Scared" was the word on his lips, but the epithet would be misplaced, he knew. Moreover, he was afraid to say it. He put it down to a desire on Jim's part to study out a plan of campaign before proceeding with the hostilities, but even that did not satisfy Bud.

"Go ter —— then!" he shouted furiously as he galloped away.

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ALONE in the darkness, Jim sucked at his pipe until it wheezed feebly and went out. Deep in gloomy meditation he didn't notice the difference. When the moon peeped over the sand hills far to the east it flooded the woods with its pale light and threw the man into bold relief against the black interior of his cabin. He discarded his chair and sat down in the doorway.

The knowledge that Brother Baxter's patient labor of the last year had been swept away in a moment's time, and by Uncle Tobe, too, cut him to the quick. A comforting thought, though, was that the little preacher would know that he, Jim, was not to blame, and that he would accept the situation and try to make the best of it.

"Never strive for the unattainable, my lad," the old man had said to him one day, when Jim was angry about a fight that had occurred; "nor grieve over the inevitable. God brings many things to pass in which our poor minds can see no good, but everything He does is in a just cause and has a worthy object."

The words were a little large for Jim but he finally grasped their meaning and gained a vague insight into the old man's philosophy.

"Thar may be some good in this trouble," mused Jim, partly to himself and partly to the moon, "but I can't see it. Can't nothin' but a miracle like some o' them Brother Baxter told me about keep a lot of fellows from gittin'killed in this business."

He frowned in perplexity and struck a match and held it to his pipe.

"I'll do it!" he exclaimed between puffs. "By Joe, I'll git the sheriff! He might be able to find out about the killin' an' take Uncle Tobe on to jail if he done it. 'Course that'll throw everybody sore at me, but Mayella'll stand by me, 'cause she's got the same views as me an' then—an' then she loves me, too. I'm a-gonna see her again tomorrow."

He whispered the last words as though the secret was too precious for his moonbeam audience to hear. He leaned forward to knock the ashes out of his pipe against a rock.

From the gloomy blackness of the pine thicket a few hundred yards away came the sharp crack of a rifle, slapping the stillness of the Summer night full in the face and starting the echoes ringing down the rocky cañons. In the same breath with the report a soft thud sounded in the cabin as a bullet struck a log in the back wall of the room. Jim stepped quickly inside and closed the door.

The war was on.

There was no possibility of the shot being an accident. It was a deliberate attempt to kill him. Being aware of Pink's sneaking nature Jim charged that worthy with the act.

"Feelin' sorter sore 'cause he missed me this evenin'," said Jim as he turned in for the night. "I've shorely got ter see the sheriff tomorrow. If I can git this stopped now, and this shootin' business settled an' all, 'twon't go no further. —— thet or'nary Pink anyhow!"

The anathema consoled him somewhat and he went to sleep.

"BUT listen, honey," he argued the next morning, after Mayella had decidedly negatived his plan to go for the sheriff, "if we can find out who killed Bill Turner and send the guilty feller to jail we c'n keep the whole neighborhood out o' the fuss. Don't make no difference if Uncle Tobe did do it, he ought to pay fer it. If we don't do that you know whut'll happen—half the men aroun' here'll git shot, an' there ain't no sense in it, 'cause we c'n pervent it."

He leaned back against the boulder he was sitting by with the grieved expression of one who knows he is right yet has his pet scheme vetoed by one whose opinion is the equivalent of a law.

A strange look came into the girl's soft blue eyes. Instead of answering she let her gaze wander toward the distant sand hills. A smoky haze, which the sun was not yet strong enough to dispel, hung low over the valleys between the hills, and a vagrant breeze played softly in the tops of the tall pines.

A little to the right and below where she sat on the southern spur of Tucker's Ridge, a solitary crow was winging his way over the depression known as Dene Hollow, cawing raucously for his mate to follow. She saw the parallel to her own position and turned back to Jim. Her lip quivered with suppressed anguish. None but herself knew the struggle raging in her breast.

"No," she said firmly, a tear stealing

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from her eye despite her effort to hold it back, "you mustn't do that, Jim boy. If anybody saw you going they'd shoot you, an' I can't let you go. Let me handle it. I've got a good plan, an' I want you to stay out of it. I know Pink shot at you, but I slipped his gun out and moved the sight a little to one side, so he can't hit anything with it. Please, dear, do as I say, won't you? Oh, you must! Boy, they'd kill you first one if you brought the sheriff in here! While I——"

She slipped an arm around his neck and laid her cheek against his. To her surprize he didn't kiss her as was his usual wont when she did that way. Instead he drew back slightly. Instantly her eyes smoldered with suspicion. She arose and began toying nervously with a pine-cone. She was hurt. And worse still the temper of the Robbins family—the only fault she had inherited from her father—was making itself felt.

Jim had shifted his position to escape a pine-needle which had worked through his clothes, and knew nothing of her thoughts. In his ignorance of her mood he blundered on, widening the gap between them with each sentence.

"Whut's come over you, Mayella? I 'lowed I'd have your help in this, after the way you seemed to 'gree with Brother Baxter. My lord, 'Ella, how c'n ye stand to see them boys git shot, all fer nothin'? I don't aim ter make ye mad, honey, but ye know it's yer paw an' Pink that start most o' the trouble here. If we could git them ter behave, it 'ud be all right."

The seriousness of the situation was getting on his nerves, and his stubborn disposition, fanned by her apparent indifference, was rising to do battle.

"The sheriff's comin' might make 'em be peaceable. Whut's gittin' the matter with Pink, anyhow? Thar wasn't no need in him shootin' at me yesterday. Seems like he's sorter queer ever since Cousin Luly sacked him at the party at Tobe Harrington's that night," he continued like an idiot, not noticing that his words were like oil on a fire. "Told her he'd be —— if he wanted ter go anyhow. Got whupped fer it, too. Whut was he doin' in Newell's Gap, t'other mornin'?"

White-lipped with anger the girl faced him defiantly. Her fists were clenched tight.

"I might have known you'd put your folks first," she flamed. "Do you think I'm goin' to take all them slurs? My folks ain't much but they're mine, an' you ain't got no right to talk about 'em. You just think the sheriff would take them, don't you? Always talkin' 'bout Brother Baxter, an' you was the one that raised that—that blood barrier he talked about. I was a fool not to see that it was your folks you cared for—not mine. Now, once more—will you wait about the sheriff?"

Her breast heaved with emotion, but her eyes were flashing.

"Why, Mayella?"

"Because I say so," she snapped imperiously.

There was no sign of weakening in the firm lips. Jim knew that in this test of wills he must give way or lose her. The thought that she had some ulterior motive urging her, that she was shielding some one flashed into his mind. She knew that if law and order were called into play her father and brother, as ringleaders of the lawless element, would have to pay the penalty of numerous misdeeds. So she was going to sacrifice other men's lives to secure the safety of her own kin. The idea shocked and pained him. It also cemented his determination. He arose and faced her.

"No, Mayella, I ain't goin' to wait. I'm shamed o' you fer bein' so selfish. I'd like to please ye, but it's my duty to keep this thing down if I can. Ye ain't quite right today," he added soothingly. "Ye'll see it like I do when ye think it over."

Had a rasp been drawn over her raw nerves it could not have stirred her more than that remark.

" 'Shamed nothing!" she taunted, biting her tongue to keep back the tears of rage. "You're afraid to stay. You ain't no man. You're a coward! I won't marry a coward!"

The words snapped at him like a lash of a rawhide whip, biting the deeper into his soul for coming from her, who, above all others should know that greater courage by far was required to break away from traditions as old as the oldest settlers, than in conforming to the ancient custom of ignoring the sheriff and his deputies. A swift revulsion of feeling took place in his mind.

"Coward! A coward, be I? By ——, I'll show you! I'll stay. Yes, and we'll

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fight. And I'll bring the fight right into your paw's house. An' I'll take you, too. An' when I git yo' paw, er Pink, Lord help 'em!" He spoke in quick jerks as if speech was an effort. "I was a-tryin' ter make things easy fer ye, but now— Go home, Mayella, an' tell 'em I'm comin'!"

His fists knotted with anger and the flame of his passion sent the blood streaming into his face. Mayella was astounded at the change in one whom she prided herself on knowing so thoroughly. Too late she attempted to stem the flood her words had aroused. Such a complication had not occurred to her. Her anger vanished under the fear of this fresh turn of affairs. Her carefully laid plans were scattered to the winds.

"Jim!" she begged wildly. "I didn't mean that. Oh, wait, you mustn't go like that. Wait and I'll tell you what I was goin' to do."

She ran a few steps toward him but he had turned back down the slope and was walking with rapid strides toward his cabin. Helplessly she gazed after him, the hot tears streaming down her cheeks. He was gone, and when he came again it would be with the lust of battle on his face. Feeling sick at heart she started home, but she stopped at the Widow Crowley's.

BY THE middle of the afternoon a dozen grim-looking men were gathered around Jim Howell's cabin. From the very silence—ominous sign in a backwoods gathering—of the older men, and the tense hum of conversation among the younger ones, one could gather that events of stirring moment were brewing. The crowd looked up expectantly as a mounted scout galloped up to the gate.

"Hyar, Zeke, whut news?" cried a young fellow, brandishing a rifle as he spoke.

The rider stopped his panting mule but did not dismount.

"Feller just rid away from Robbinses," he announced, wiping the sweat from his face. "Too fur away ter see who 'twas; but it looked like Sam Fuller's mule he was on. Warn't no sign o' the women folks about. Come 'ere, Jim."

Jim walked over to the man's side and for several minutes they were engaged in an earnest exchange of words in a very low tone.

"Let's start, fellers," shouted Bud, vaulting the fence as he spoke. "I just want ter git a bead on thet or'nary Pink!"

Jim Howell walked out and faced his kinsmen.

"You git back in that yard," he ordered Bud. "This here's my fight an' I'm gonna run it. It's mighty kind of you fellers to come over an' help me," he said to the men, "but it's partly my fault that it's started an' I'm gonna finish it. I'm goin' ter Robbinses' now. I got Zeke here to do a little talkin' ter old man Robbins fer me an' put up a proposition to him.

"It's me they're mad at mostly on 'count o' Mayella, an' I told Zeke to tell the old man that instead o' havin' a general killin', ter let me an' him an' Pink fight it out to a finish, an' he agreed. In return fer it I swore ter find out who killed Bill Turner and let the man be punished, whether it's one o' us er not.

"If you fellers wanter help jus' spread out in the woods around us to back me up in case any o' them try to two-time me. But listen: I'm a-goin' to settle with Pink an' his paw without any help!"

"The —— ye air!" objected one man. "Why, Jim, ye'll be killed right off! We're goin' ter be in on this!"

A chorous of approving grunts followed.

"You heared whut I said, didn't yer?" asked Jim. "Well, I meant it. An' I'll lick anybody that says I didn't!" His lips were drawn in a tense line and the grim determination in his burning eyes carried conviction. "Hit don't make no diff'runce now whether I'm killed er not, but I'm gonna git Pink Robbins an' his paw!"

He deliberately turned his back on the men and walked away, heading straight for the cabin on Tucker's Ridge. Exclamations of astonishment, excited whisperings and audible conjectures regarding his sudden madness came to his ears as his friends strung out behind him following his lead.

Something seemed dead in Jim's breast, leaving only a tormenting desire to clutch Pink and the old man by their sneaking throats and squeeze with all his strength until Mayella pleaded with him to stop. Called him a coward! The accusation had rankled and festered in his mind until the impulse to kill, kill with his bare hands, possessed his consciousness. Law and order, peace and quiet, Brother Baxter and

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his doctrine of brotherly love, all were forgotten. The blood of his ancestors—that red fighting blood that flowed in his veins—clamored for action.

Fifty yards from the house he stopped behind a big tree and repeated the challenge he had sent by Zeke.

"Go ter ——!" came the insolent retort.

So they had lied. The fact infuriated him the more.

He deliberately raised his automatic, took quick aim at a pig in the yard and fired. With a hoarse cough the porker rolled over on its back, its feet quivering in the air. The act enraged the occupants of the house, for a fusilade of shots whined and sang through the woods in the direction of Jim's protected body. For some minutes he amused himself shooting pigs and chickens. Having no grudge against the animals and being by nature a humane man, he disliked that method of bringing the men out of their den, but it shortly had the desired effect. The older Robbins shouted to him to stop.

"Why don't ye fight men, ye —— skunk, and let the stock be? I'll fight ye if ye'll throw down yer gun!"

Jim slipped the gun into his pocket and stepped out into the opening, holding out his empty hands to show he was unarmed. The old man came out to meet him.

The preliminaries consisted of wary circling on both sides for an advantageous position for a clinch. A good hold once obtained, the fight would simmer down into a test of endurance with the stronger man throttling his opponent.

Because of his youth, Jim was the stronger, but old man Robbins had the reputation of being the most scientific wrestler in that section of the foot-hills. The quick, easy spring to his step would have reminded a hunter of a panther, and the long arms hanging loosely at his sides had the steely strength of an ape's. He glared ferociously at Jim, and his fingers twitched.

Jim's rage had subsided into a grim hate, but he held himself in check. His life and the future relations of the two clans depended upon his emerging the victor. Perhaps he wondered in brief flashes what Mayella's attitude would be toward him in case he killed her father, but if he did so he gave no sign. He stood coolly upon the defensive and waited for Robbins to precipitate hostilities.

With a savage snarl Robbins sprang toward Jim and thrust his head into the younger man's stomach, at the same time circling his waist with his arms in the bear-like hug with a sudden tripping motion of his feet that had downed many a good man. He exerted every ounce of his gorilla-like strength to swing his opponent off his feet and thus end the battle in one great swirl of action.

Such an onslaught was not to be denied, although Jim had been expecting some such trick, and the young man was lifted in the air and overbalanced. He partially saved himself by grasping Robbins by the seat of his trousers and when he fell he dragged the old man to the ground.

Seeing that he was about to be worsted, Robbins freed himself for a moment and snatched the pistol from Jim's pocket, his hand having discovered it when the fight began. Then ensued a terrific struggle for possession of the weapon. A shot crashed out and a bullet buried itself in the ground a foot from the writhing bodies. Looking up as best he could, Jim saw Pink rushing to his father's aid.

A little boy followed Pink out of the house to see the killing at close range, and in running ahead, stumbled over his brother's foot. With a curse Pink knocked him down and fired again, but his aim was wild and the bullet grooved old man Robbins' head, stunning him.

Jim leaped to his feet, and snatching his gun aimed pointblank at Pink. Only a dull click resulted. He had used his last cartridge. He dashed toward Pink, momentarily expecting to drop in his tracks, but Fate in the form of the small boy was preparing to intervene.

"I'm gonna kill ye, durn ye," yelled the urchin, picking up a rock. "I tol' ye I'd do hit if ye hit me again!"

With the words he hurled the stone straight at his brother, striking him in the jaw. The temper the old man had bequeathed to his family had proved a boomerang. The bullet intended for Jim sang harmlessly over his head and in an instant he flung his whole weight on Pink.

Both men went to the ground with a crash. The rifle flew from Pink's grasp and he struggled furiously to free the death-grip Jim had seized on his throat. His efforts were futile and he grew black in the face, gasping wildly for breath. But the

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inexorable grip on his windpipe did not relax and when his overstrained lungs reached the bursting point he lost consciousness.

Still Jim's fingers pressed hard and tight. So intent was he on squeezing the last spark of life from the body of his antagonist he failed to see the boy rushing at him with uplifted rifle.

"Git off'n him, —— yer, ye're killin' him! You can't hit him jus' 'cause I do. I'm gonna kill you now!"

He swung the rifle with all his strength and struck Jim a glancing blow on the skull. He had the satisfaction of seeing his enemy fall limp across Pink's prostrate body.

"Now I've done hit!" he said calmly, looking about. "The hull —— outfit's cleaned up. Looky yonder!"

His exclamation was caused by a great shout from the woods near the cabin, and he dropped the rifle and fled.

WHEN Jim opened his eyes he was in his own cabin and some one was bending over him, bathing his wounded head with a cloth dipped in cold water.

"Jim boy," murmured the some one, close to his ear. "Did they hurt you bad? My pore boy. An' it was all my fault!"

"Mayella!" he gasped weakly. "Whut—whut you doin' here?"

"Here's where I belong," answered Mayella promptly, albeit tearfully, "if you'll let me stay. Forgive me, boy. But here comes Brother Baxter. He wants to talk to you."

The little preacher took a seat on the side of Jim's bed. His face seemed lighted up with a mysterious pleasure.

"Feel better, Jim?" he asked kindly.

"I feel sorter bunged up, Doctor, and I ort to, too, after losin' my temper an' forgettin' all about your preachin'. But honest, Brother Baxter, I couldn't help it. I was shorely riled."

"As I have told you, son, the God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. It was the best thing in the world for the good of the community that you did so. It was the death-knell to future feuds. Jim, that idea of yours in reducing the battle to one between yourself and old man Robbins and Pink, convinced the others around here that you and I were in earnest about wanting to stop those sporadic outbursts. After we picked you up each faction shook hands with the other and agreed to live peaceably. Then the sheriff——"

"The sheriff?" queried Jim, raising his throbbing head in surprize. "How did he git here? An' you?"

"Mayella, my son. She stopped at Mrs. Crowley's after she left you this morning and got a horse. She came after me first, and we telephoned the sheriff, who came most of the way in a car. But we got here too late to stop the fight, and it was a good thing, too. If we had perhaps it would not have had such a splendid ending."

"Then Mayella did love me, too," muttered Jim happily.

"Yes, my boy, she does," smiled the little man. "She told me all about it. She wanted to handle the affair herself, because she was afraid you would be hurt if you went for the sheriff yourself. She knew that she could do so in safety, and as the matter concerned her more personally than it did you, she disliked to have you interfere. Of course, she didn't know that you would fly into a rage the way you did."

"Did they git Uncle Tobe?"

"Pink did that killing, Jim. It's a long story and Mayella will tell you. He suffers from a mental derangement that occasionally throws him into a bad spell, or tantrum, in which he is not responsible for his actions. The sheriff has taken him to the asylum."

"I 'lowed somethin' like that would be," said Jim.

"Yes, Mayella saw the shooting occur and wanted to get Pink removed peaceably. That's why she objected so vigorously to your plan."

"Tell her to come here," said Jim.

The preacher softly left the room, while Jim waited in anticipation.

"Mayella," whispered Jim a minute later to the girl who hovered over him mother-like, "you come to me of your own accord, didn't you? I knowed you would, honey, even if the families did fuss. They won't no more, though, an' I'm glad, dear. Like I told myself while ago, blood ain't the only tie that binds people together. Love's stronger'n any of 'em, ain't it?"

The warmth in her tear-wet eyes was his answer.

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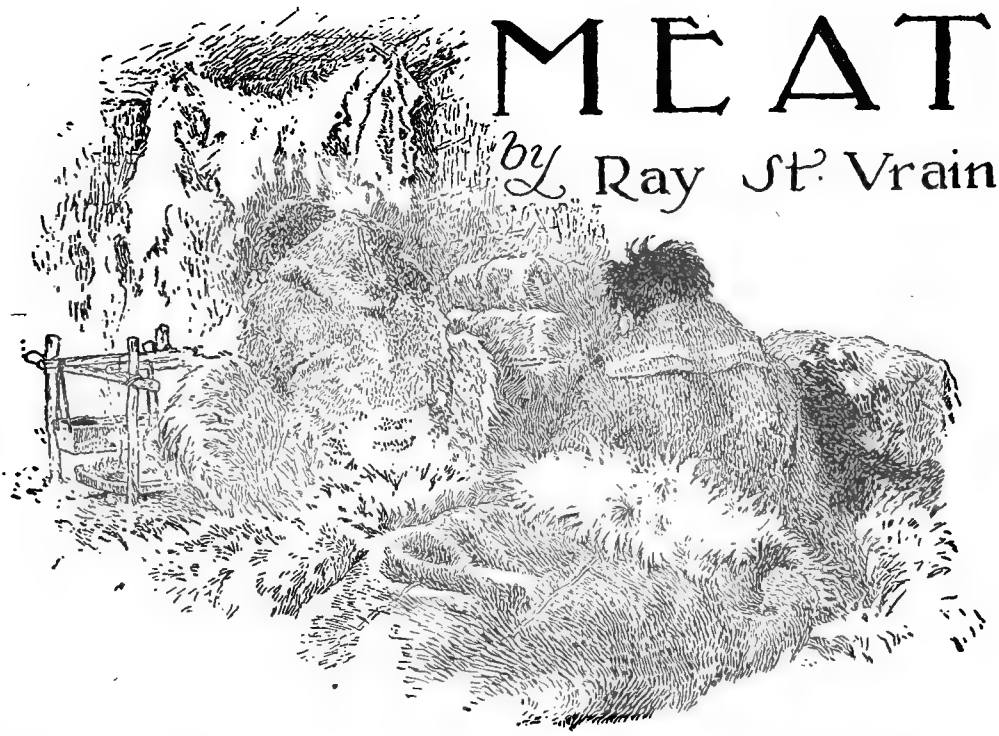
MEAT

by Ray St. Vrain



BACON! And frying at that! *Yum-m-m—!* The incomparable savor!

At first the "Angel" thought he was dreaming. But the odor of the sugar-cured meat persisted—increased; and, pulling his eyelids apart—they were almost literally frozen together away up here on the northernmost point of Greenland at a latitude of eighty-four degrees—he did not have to pinch himself or pull his beard to make sure he was awake—absolute proof was afforded by the sight of a man at the blubber lamp holding a goodly chunk of the bacon over the blaze by means of a couple of spits.

Wide-awake now, the Angel gave a prodigious start that almost landed him out of his sleeping-bag. His heart thumped against his empty stomach. His meat—their meat—the meat of all of them! Which one of the men was stealing it—preparing himself this feast? "Sawed-Off" Sackett, of course—his broad, squat back, bull neck and peaked bald head betrayed him.

Breathless, the Angel lay motionless thinking. More and more the smoke from the grilling bacon was filling the cache, dominating even the sickish odor of the blubber. On the floor in their sleeping-bags lay the other men snoring—Briscoe, Youngbrother, McGeehan, and the South American mestizo Luis. It was their meat—his, the Angel's—that Sawed-Off Sackett was cooking.

Meat is meat—particularly at the northernmost point of Greenland with the thermometer sixty below; and meat is meat—that means more valuable than the Shah's diamonds—when it has been saved, and scrimped, and rationed at half an ounce a day to a man for weeks. Half an ounce a day in the long, long wait for the relief ship that was supposed to have started from Fort Hope a month ago. Half an ounce a day—and there stood Sawed-Off grilling half a pound for his own capacious belly.

And as the angry deep blood shot up to the Angel's usually placid brow he reflected on that same belly of Sawed-Off's. Never had it sagged—fallen in upon itself—folded up and disappeared—like the Angel's own, for instance. It had always maintained a suspicion of roundness—chubbiness even—while all the rest joked feebly about their midsection concavities.

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Sawed-Off had kept his weight surprizingly well. The others had fallen off to skin and bones, mere shadows—what could you expect on daily rations of half an ounce of bacon, a bit of hardtack, weak tea, and only a cup at that, and that horribly sickening, indigestible soup made of boiled sealskin, reindeer moss and small shrimps? But Sawed-Off, grinning mysteriously, had declared reindeer moss and rock lichens good enough eating for anybody—and had pointed to his own solid one hundred and fifty pounds as proof.

"How do you manage to extract any nutriment from the mess?" Briscoe, the leader of the outfit, had asked.

Incidentally Briscoe's own weight had run down to one hundred and twenty or thereabouts.

Sawed-Off grinned his snaggled grin.

"Used to it, Cap. Been up here at the top of the world before. Lived a whole Winter on it. It's all in the habit."

Once or twice Briscoe, who doled out the rations, had spoken of the mysteriously diminishing bacon. At first he had rather suspected the mestizo Luis, who though showing no increase in avoirdupois had exhibited a sullen spirit for weeks. But Luis, sharply observed, had never been found in the commissariat—a little corner of the cache curtained off by a couple of bearskins.

Well, now the secret was out. Good-humored, eternally grinning Sawed-Off, the last man to be suspected, was the culprit.

The Angel, watching the meat-thief furtively, squirmed noiselessly out of his sleeping-bag. At the same moment Sawed-Off lifted the bacon to his lips. He was deep in the savory chunk, almost grunting aloud in his fierce satisfaction, when the Angel tiptoed up behind him and gave him a solid smash on the jaw. The Angel had been a heavyweight once—back in the hills of Colorado whence he had come—but now was a miserable little featherweight, due to the rock lichen diet that Sawed-Off had found so nourishing. The skinny arm that delivered the blow had a bunch of muscle on it, however, and the fury behind it was such an effective propeller that Sawed-Off's one hundred and fifty pounds went down in a heap.

The thief sprang up and squared off. The Angel, quick as lightning, smashed him again—this time on the nose; and the blood spurted. The mestizo Luis muttered in his sleep. Sawed-Off, taking counsel of discretion, did not renew the combat.

"You dog," muttered the Angel with a string of unangelic oaths.

Sawed-Off did not argue the question. He hung his head. After a bit he flashed a sidelong glance at the Angel's gaunt flushed face and whimpered sheepishly:

"I was hungry—starving. A man oughtn't be blamed——"

He looked longingly at the bacon on the floor.

"Come," he said, "what's the use? We're friends, Angel—and we're starving. I swear to God I'll never touch any more grub—not even a rock lichen. But we can't let that God's bacon go to waste. Come, we'll share it—the others won't be on——"

The Angel, infuriated, picked up the God's meat and hurled it flush at Sawed-Off's still bleeding nose. More blood spurted. Then he spat on it, rubbed it in the dirt of the floor, befouled it as much as decency—and the limited means of the cache—would permit, then buried it in the dirty clothes can.

"That's what I think of you, dog," he panted, "you and your hell's meat. Now I'm not going to blab on you—you know what'd happen. Even if Cap didn't kill you the men would. I'm going to give you another chance. Maybe you're worth it—I'm not forgetting one or two good turns you've done me. A minute ago you mentioned swearing to God. Well, swear to God now you'll keep away from the commissariat in future."

Sawed-Off swore to God, laid his hand on his heart, squeezed out a tear from his fishy eyes, crept into his sleeping-bag—and snored. The Angel stayed awake the rest of the night. In the morning when Cap Briscoe sniffed around hound-like and insisted he smelled bacon the Angel declared a piece of rind had fallen into the blubber oil. And Sawed-Off, his face bandaged, complained about that intermittent abscess on his gum which was swelling again—none of the men noticing that most of the bandage was across his nose instead of on his jaw.

A WEEK went by—with the mercury perceptibly rising but the relief ship from Fort Hope not yet shown up. Briscoe had come to the conclusion the boat had grounded on a floe or

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been crushed by bergs, and so expressed himself; and nobody had the courage to argue the question with him. Rations had to be cut again. Ironically enough Sawed-Off Sackett was the only one that growled at the diminished allowance.

"What you're handing us now of that bacon ain't even a decent smell," he observed disgustedly. "Why not have one good dinner and then founder and thank God we're dead?"

"That bacon's got to last three weeks. Then—God help us," was Briscoe's reply.

Famine threatened. The men began making tea from saxifrage and Arctic willow —the real thing having given out—but the nourishment from this miserable decoction was even less than that afforded by the rock lichen soup. The shrimps, too, were more of a mockery than anything else. They were so small that it required almost a thousand to weigh a pound. Besides, the men were growing too weak to catch them. The Angel during this desperate period kept a bulldog watch on Sackett, but discovered nothing suspicious in the Sawed-Off's actions.

Contributory proof that he was not stealing the bacon was furnished by his rapidly disappearing flesh. The Angel noted with grim satisfaction that he seemed to be losing almost two pounds a day. Soon he began to look respectably emaciated, and his stomach took on a concavity that was remarked by the others with more or less feeble amusement.

"What's the matter, Sawed-Off?" asked Cap Briscoe, trying to grin. "Rock lichen soup seems to have lost its power as a flesh-builder."

One morning the men, frozen stiff, crawled out of their sleeping-bags earlier than usual and found Sawed-Off Sackett deathly sick at that celebrated stomach of his. He was vomiting—undigested bacon!

Immediately four tigers—lean, starving, maddened tigers—were at him and on him. The Angel led the attack. Very unangelically he grabbed one side of Sawed-Off's blanched visage while he began pommeling the other. Youngbrother, McGeehan, the mestizo Luis were on top of the culprit in a moment and bowled him over. They had begun to use their boots on him when Briscoe drew his gun.

"Lay off," he thundered. It was a wonder he had so much voice left. "The first man that gives our bacon-lover another kick will get a bullet where he needs it. Sawed-Off deserves death—he knows it, too; but I'm the boss and I'll attend to him."

Briscoe's word was law—even at this stage of the game, with four men starving and the other vomiting undigested bacon. So the Angel, Youngbrother, McGeehan and the mestizo Luis, sullenly muttering, backed away against the wall of the cache and then waited to see what punishment Briscoe dealt out.

They were disappointed. Sawed-Off, sick, livid-lipped, deathly pale, crawled whiningly to Cap's feet and begged for mercy.

"I'll never do it again," he blubbered, "so help me God. I was sick—I thought I was going to croak. But I'll never touch another piece of bacon——"

"Mighty little left to touch," growled Briscoe, who had gone into the commissariat to investigate. "There's not more'n a pound here——"

A howl went up from the four hungry ones—and a fresh demand for the thief's life. But Briscoe, still covering them, told Sawed-Off he could have one more chnace.

"You're a dog, Sawed-Off," he said quietly, "a glutton, a swiper of food out of starving men's mouths, a would-be murderer—and maybe you ought to be grilled like the meat you stole. But we're all looking the next world in the face and I don't like the idea of sending you to hell first. It's too bad when pals like us are companions in misery one has to pull off a piece of meanness and treachery that would make the devil himself go green with envy. But we'll let that pass—this time. We'll give you another chance——"

"Cap," interposed the Angel, stepping forward, "you're too —— good. This miscalled man ought to be chucked right now. One night not so long ago I woke up and found him——"

But Sawed-Off set up a terrific howling. The Angel, who had lungs of his own, tried to drown him out. Bricsoe held up his hand for silence.

"The past is past," he said, "and meat that's gone is gone. We'll wipe the slate. Sawed-Off shall have his chance. We're not going to turn executioners—if we can help it. The bacon's there in the commissariat. I'm not going to lock it up—I couldn't if I wanted to—where's the lock

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and key? I'm not going to set a guard on it either. We're going to trust Sawed-Off. I believe he'll do the right thing—and the safe thing. That pound of bacon is worth more than a pound of gold—and if Sawed-Off lays his finger on so much as one-sixteenth of an ounce of it—listen now, Sawed-Off—I'll give you to the men to do with as they like."

That was all from Briscoe. He turned his back. Sawed-Off did some fervid vowing to Heaven. McGeehan and Youngbrother, scowling, nodded heads together. The mestizo Luis, muttering an oath in degenerate Spanish, mouthed something about "meat for meat." The Angel, of all the men, openly insisted on Sawed-Off's life as forfeit.

"What's your individual kick?" sharply demanded Briscoe. "What did we give you your nickname for? Are you going to make us sorry we didn't name you devil instead?"

And the Angel subsided.

THE next week was a harrowing one. There was no sign of the relief ship. Anxiously, despairingly the men scanned the little inlet and the bay beyond for the first glimpse of succor. None appeared. Briscoe, however, felt a last faint flutter of hope. The rising temperature was causing the ice to break and if the boat ever reached the bay she would be able to land without difficulty.

But starvation with its horrible concomitants was more than an offset for warmer weather. Every mother's son of the men was in a desperate condition. All were more or less feverish; the impossible rock lichen soup had given McGeehan and Youngbrother blood flux; the mestizo Luis was out of his head most of the time, giggling like an idiot and fancying himself back in the hot and humid forests of his own Ecuador; the Angel was out of sorts from top to toe; and Sawed-Off Sackett, the baby of the bunch, spent his days and nights with his hands on his stomach—now artistically concave—begging for food.

"His whining is bad for our ears," commented Briscoe drily, "but it's proof he hasn't been handling the bacon."

As for that, the bacon itself was proof of it. It had not diminished by so much as the least fraction of an ounce. Practically everything else—except the everlasting rock lichens and willow moss—had disappeared. The commissariat was empty save for the meat. There it stayed—waited—in its brown covering. Sawed-Off insisted he'd be satisfied with just one bite of that delicious grease-impregnated paper. But Briscoe wouldn't let even that be touched. At last the men grew peeved.

"Cap," said the Angel with an ugly scowl, "are you going to leave it for other fools who come and find us here—a human boneyard?"

"Let's have a dinner on it and then put our sleeping-bags and go out into the —— cold and take the final snooze," suggested Youngbrother rather fantastically.

But Briscoe shook his reddish mane.

"Boys, we're saving that bacon till just before the last gasp—and we're not quite there yet. I figure by drinking plenty of water we can last four and a half days yet—that is, if the flux eases up on McGeehan and Youngbrother and none of the rest get taken down. Then we can tackle the bacon——"

"Why are we waiting?" whined Sawed-Off. "Dead men can't eat bacon."

For once the others agreed with him.

"Sure," gasped McGeehan, already bled white. "Let's play it safe, Cap."

Youngbrother tried a grin. It ought to have been labeled.

"Irish and Sawed-Off are right, Cap. Dead stomachs can't digest."

Briscoe still shook his head—and made a better stagger at a grin than Youngbrother had done.

"The fact you men have so much fight left in you is proof you're not nearly as dead as you think. Oh, yes, you'll last those four and a half days; then the bacon—with some biscuit crums I've been saving on the side will keep life in us a couple of days more—almost a week all told. A lot can happen in a week—especially if it's the last one. Think of the fellows that came up here to this frozen hell and were saved at the last moment—Lieutenant Greely in particular. The same thing may happen to us. We don't absolutely know the relief's not coming. At any rate it's up to us to keep going as long as we can—and the way to do that is to conserve the bacon."

The next two days were the hardest yet experienced by the marooned men. Literal famine was stalking the cache and pointing its gaunt finger at its victims. All

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the party besides being ravenously hungry were feverish and painfully sleepy, even Briscoe succumbing to the general illness and lassitude. Still, discipline was fairly maintained among the starving men. The rule of the cache was to allow nobody to sleep longer than two hours at a time, this precaution being necessary to prevent death from torpor—always an accompaniment of starvation and intense cold.

Two days—with no relief, no rescue. What were the men to do? Die in the cache like rats in a hole? None had the strength to go in search of succor even if succor had been near. Their fate, it seemed, was to perish miserably like so many intrepid polar adventurers who had gone before.

And the bacon—God's meat? In their despair three of the men, McGeehan, Youngbrother and Luis, had forgotten it—but not Briscoe, the Angel and Sawed-Off. On the third night the Angel dreamed of it. The dream was such a vivid, rapturous one—the starving man was sitting at a table with a hundred beautiful slices of crisply cooked bacon and fifty fried eggs before him—that it awoke the sleeper with a start. And there in the dim glow of the blubber lamp his wide, startled eyes picked out one dominating figure—the short, squat figure of Sawed-Off Sackett. The Angel, sharply awake, realized the truth instantly—Sawed-Off was bolting the bacon. He had not taken time to cook it—time even to put out the light. In his mad gluttony he was biting off the meat in great chunks like a hungry dog, braving discovery—death.

It took the Angel a few moments to squirm out of his sleeping-bag. Sawed-Off heard him—and bolted the last chunk of bacon. Then he turned and grabbed the rusty bread-knife from the table. The Angel forgot his fever, lassitude, weakness and with a wild yell—some lungs that boy still had—catapulted full upon the bacon-eater.

Sawed-Off reeled against the cache wall but managed to slash an ugly cut on his assailant's cheek. The Angel was not to be deterred by trifles and in a moment had wrenched the knife from the other's grasp and lifted it ready to stab through the coward's heart when Briscoe, awakened by the noise, rushed up, grabbed the upraised arm and deflected the lunge.

"You want to play fair, Angel, don't you?" he queried with quiet reproach. "I said I'd give this dog to all of you to do with as you see fit—and here you're playing the hog. Don't you want the others to help slice this pie?"

McGeehan, Youngbrother and the mestizo Luis scrambled out of their sleeping-bags. Briscoe in a miraculous access of strength picked the cowering Sawed-Off up bodily and hurled him against the cache wall.

"Stand up," he roared, "and eat your lead like a man."

Sawed-Off, whining for mercy, sagged and slid down in a heap. Briscoe set him on his feet again. Then he took out his gun.

"Boys," he said, "draw straws. The shortest kills him."

Fate picked the Angel. He took the gun, aimed.

Then Fate played another prank. The jade sprang her supreme sensation now. The gun dropped from the Angel's suddenly limp fingers—the starving men, forgetting the bacon-thief, forgetting everything that had gone before, staggered out of the cache into the moonlight and made for the inlet, falling prone on the snow, but lifting their arms to heaven nevertheless, thanking God they had at last heard the whistle they had been waiting so long to hear, praising Him that the relief ship had arrived.

All the men left the cache—all but the Angel and Sawed-Off Sackett. Sackett gained his feet, but the Angel, throwing off the spell of the whistle and coming back to the business in hand, sent him down again with a stinging blow.

"I'm hungry as ——," he said, "and that whistle is just as much music to my ears as to yours. But, bacon-eater, I'm going to attend to you before I go."

Weak as he was, his fury made him twice as strong as Sackett; so he had no trouble in putting through his sinister program—binding the thief with a stout hempen cord, dragging him to the commissariat, standing him up against the wall, roping his neck to the two spikes on which the meat had hung. In mortal terror Sawed-Off whined to be taken to the ship.

"I'll work my hands off—be the slave of the gang—just give me one square meal——"

"Sure," chuckled the Angel, "I'll give you a square meal."

He dived into the dirty clothes can, fished out the piece of bacon he had first

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seen Sackett eating, then tied it to a string and fastened it to the roof of the cache, where it dangled before the starving man's face not a foot away.

Then the Angel said good-by.

Already Briscoe, Youngbrother, McGeehan and Luis, unable to walk and flighty from fever, were being carried aboard the boat. The Angel staggered out into the bright moonlight and fell prone half-way to the shore. The ship's men came and picked him up.

"We can't get anything out of Briscoe and the rest," said one. "They're too done up to talk. But wasn't there another of you—Sawed-Off Sackett? Where is he? Croaked?"

"Sure," grinned the Angel. "Too much meat did it. There's one guy that ought to have been a vegetarian!"

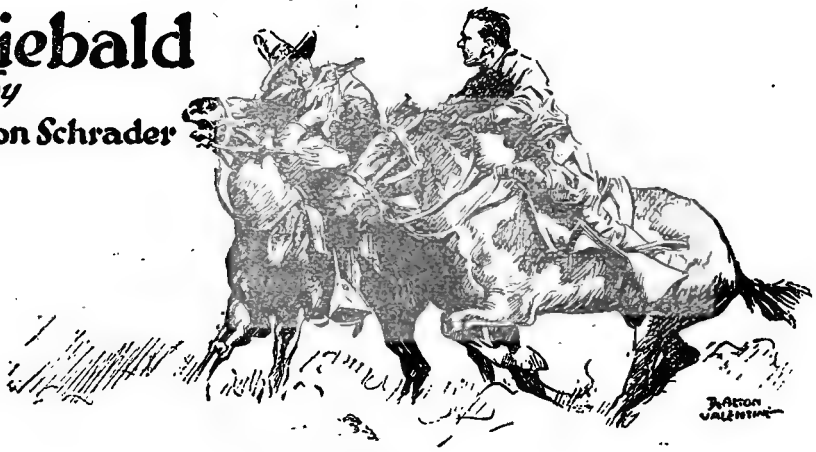
IN THE morning before the boat put out several of the relief party went to the cache to get the men's belongings.

Sawed-Off Sackett sagged motionless against the wall, dead—the bacon still dangling not a foot away.

The Piebald

by

Atreus von Schrader



Author of "Foxed."

"STEADY, horse!"

The man on the piebald's back sat easily in the saddle, the reins loose on the powerful shoulders moving like pistons before him. He spoke again, this time in sharp command—

"You red-an'-white fool, listen t'me!"

From a delirious, joyful run the big horse shortened his stride to a gallop, to a mere canter, and then, under the quiet voice, to a walk. Private Jim Hamelin, B Troop, patted the sweaty shoulder, where the lather had frothed under the breastplate.

"You're gettin' some sense. I'm proud of you," he said, and the alert, questing ears came back at his words.

Plucked raw from the Montana ranges, the piebald had been passed by an inspector who gave ninety-five points for conformation and five for manners. Which last was an undeserved compliment. When the troop got him as part of a new draft, he was a trouble-maker of the worst sort, for he was intelligent, and he was not afraid. He had gone into the chute of the first train he ever saw with his ears forward and his tail up, and then he had kicked out the side of the car.

Four years old, gorgeously marked in deep blood-bay and creamy white, from his round, black hoofs and flat, well-boned legs up he was sound as a bronze bell. After a tumultuous week in the horse-lines he was condemned as an "outlaw," unbreakable, having thrown in succession and with violence the best "busters" the regiment owned. Whereupon Private Jim Hamelin, of B Troop, went to his Captain and pled for him.

"An' he's got plenty o' sense, sir. He's put together nice, an' I believe he'll make a good 'un. I'd like t' try my hand with him, sir. He's the only real horse in the last draft, an' we need horses, sir."

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Captain Thomas listened sympathetically.

"Looks bad for the cavalry to be sending back horses as unmanageable," he mused. Then, to Hamelin, "All right. You can try him for a week. I like his looks too. But we can't have any more men broken up. If you can't tame him, he'll have to go."

How Private Hamelin handled the piebald, or what he did to gain his confidence, was not apparent, but a week later the "red-and-white devil" was going quietly under the saddle, or quietly enough to warrant his being kept. From that time on Hamelin spent what spare time he had with the new troop-horse, and a curious bond grew between the big animal and the quiet, gray-eyed man who never raised his voice and never made a sudden, unexpected motion. The two came to be known as the "Twins," and stable-gossip reported that Hamelin kissed the pinto good night regularly.

Whether he did or not, the piebald fulfilled his prediction. Easily the toughest horse in the troop, he could give the rest a lead and a beating on a forced march over the blazing Texas sands, and Hamelin weighed a hundred and sixty pounds without his equipment.

B Troop was stationed not far north of the Rio Grande, at the back of beyond, its duty being to curb the murderous enthusiasms of certain saddle-colored Chihuahuans on the opposite side of that flat and treacherous stream and to discourage marauding excursions.

One band in particular, under the command of a dusky leader who, with sinister humor, called himself Amoroso, was their chief scourge. With his ragged followers—Amoroso spent all of his loot, except horses, which he kept, on ammunition instead of uniforms—he had a devilish ability in crossing the river, harrying the lonely ranch-houses on the American side, and returning to his haunts before their smoldering ashes cooled. Time and again a bullet-marked cattleman on an exhausted pony had galloped up to the little post to tell of a swift descent, a demand for money, or food, or livestock, and, all too often, a tale of rapine and murder.

B Troop would answer the bugle's blaring "boots and saddles," take up the trail, and lose it at the river-bank. They were forbidden to cross and invade the territory of a friendly republic. Whereat the dusty men, cursing long and deep, would turn their weary horses back. As Sergeant Kendrick put it—

"It's like chasin' a flea on a long-haired dog, with burrs on him."

A cavalry post in Texas in the Summertime offers small opportunity for amusement. Horned toads were the only strangers, and they are not exciting. Gila monsters, cactus and shimmering heat-waves kept them company by day. The nights were brief and breathless, the day's heat settling like a cloak over the tired land, and the men writhed and muttered on their cots.

PRIVATE HAMELIN continued to spend his time on or with the piebald—the horse had no other name—and, as their understanding grew, he lost his bad habits and evil ways. He no longer bucked when he was mounted, and held his place in the troop without trying to bite chunks out of his neighbors' legs or their mounts' necks.

"He's the best there is, now he's beginnin' t'know me. An' he's got a mouth like a glove," observed Private Hamelin for perhaps the hundredth time.

The other men had laughed at his devotion to the horse until the joke had worn blunt.

"Aw, tell it to Sweeney," answered Private Brewer, who had a thick neck and suffered from the heat.

The two were sitting on the edge of the canteen porch in a patch of shade. Hamelin, as usual, was fiddling with a piece of harness; braiding a rein, to be exact. Brewer went on:

"Why don't you hire a hall, huh? You make me sick, you an' that —— crow-bait."

Hamelin looked at him in surprize.

"What you drivin' at?" he asked.

"Just what I'm tellin' you. You go bellowin' around about that goose-rumped, shark-mouthed, herrin'-gutted goat till I wish you was both dead. I'd like t' hamstring him, just t' shut you up. That's what I mean," he said angrily.

Prolonged hot weather does not make for pleasant tempers, and when men are too much together under a sun that sends stabbing pains between the eyes, little things

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loom large. Private Brewer found himself suddenly flat on the ground, a roaring in his ears, and Hamelin standing over him, his gray eyes blazing and his voice shaking with rage.

"You miscalled the best horse in the troop once too often," he said. "If you want any more, get up an' I'll give it to you."

Brewer did not want any more.

"What the —— d'you mean?" he asked, scrambling to his feet.

"You heard me the first time," said Hamelin, and Brewer took himself away, muttering under his breath.

Hamelin went back to his work. He owned an even temper. The piebald was the exception to the rule.

JUST what awakened him that night Hamelin did not know, but he came out of a restless sleep with a feeling of uneasiness, as if something were very much wrong. For a moment he lay quiet on his cot, finding comfort in the breathing of the men around him. Then, like a returning wave, the uneasiness grew as his mind cleared. He got up, walked to the door, and looked out.

The flat sandy lowland lay white and vague in the misty light of a waning moon, picked out here and there with the black shadow of a bush. A subdued whinny turned him toward the horse-lines, long white-washed rows of stalls to the left—and he saw a swift shadow, like a ghost, flash around the corner. At the same instant he recalled Brewer's threat. The words burned clear—"I'd like t' hamstring him."

"By Gosh! I wonder if he'd try it?" said Hamelin aloud, and on the word started for the stables at a run, forgetting in his haste to snatch up the heavy service pistol hanging in its holster over his cot.

His flying feet made no sound in the sand. The figure, whoever it was, had disappeared, and he held himself to a walk as he reached the first row of stalls. He crept nearer, and could hear only the soft rustle of bedding as a horse stirred, and the subdued crunch of hay. And then came a swift tremor of excitement and sudden hot rage that flowed along his spine, for at the piebald's heels stood the ghostly figure, leaning forward, with something that showed gray and cold in its hand.

Came a deep-bellowed curse—

"—— you, drop it!"

Then Hamelin sent his body in a hurtling leap across the ten feet that separated him from the other man. The crouching figure straightened, stepped swiftly back, and as Hamelin landed there was a lightning flash of steel, a groan, and the piebald's assailant turned and fled noiselessly. Hamelin lay quiet at the horse's feet, a dark pool widening around him.

It was the restless stamping of the horses and their frightened whinnying at the smell of blood that attracted the attention of the sentry on his round. Hamelin was unconscious, with a deep knife-thrust through his shoulder a few inches above his heart. The sentry's hurried yell for help woke him for an instant from his coma.

"Did he get the piebald?" he asked in a whisper.

"Nope. Didn't get nothin' but you," answered the other, and Hamelin relapsed into a stupor.

Followed two weeks of slow convalescence in the post hospital.

"You keep quiet and thank your stars and garters that knife wasn't pointed an inch lower," said the surgeon, when Hamelin, with returning strength, tried to talk. "The horse is all right, I tell you. But you won't be if you keep yourself in a lather about him."

With this he was forced to be content.

"Doctor, will you ask the sergeant to exercise him for me? He knows more about a horse than most," begged Hamelin a week later, when he was able to sit up.

The doctor promised, and did not tell his patient that the piebald had reversed the routine and had been exercising every man who mounted him by throwing him off. Two broken collar-bones, a cracked knee-cap, and various minor injuries stood to his discredit. The horse had reverted to his original wild state. He turned wicked, lost all the schooling that Hamelin had given him, and became completely unmanageable.

Hamelin left the hospital a few days later, still weak, and strangely pale after his confinement, but with the knife-wound healed. No clue had been found to identify the man with the knife. No one had seen his quarrel with Brewer, and he had said nothing of his suspicions. Charges without proof are worthless.

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Once more in his uniform, he reported to Captain Thomas.

"Glad to see you out again, Hamelin. You had a narrow squeak," said the captain. "Got any idea who the hound was that knifed you? I didn't know you had any enemies."

"No, sir," answered Hamelin.

Captain Thomas looked at the big trooper standing before him.

"Hamelin, I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you. While you were laid up that piebald of yours has been raising particular Ned with the troop." He took a paper from his desk. "Private Conklin, kicked; badly bruised. Sergeant Kendrick, thrown; shoulder hurt. Private Brewer, thrown and dragged; knee injured and collar-bone cracked."

A grim smile lighted Hamelin's face at the last item.

"Yes, sir," he said.

The captain tapped the desk with a pencil.

"It won't do, Hamelin. I don't know what system you used on that brute to tame him, but we can't have any one-man horses here, and nobody else can handle him at all."

Hamelin's jaw-muscles tightened as he stood at attention. He knew what was coming. The captain went on:

"I'm sorry. But you won't be fit to ride for another week, and even then the same condition would exist. I know you think a lot of the piebald, and, with you, he's a good animal. But we can't have the troop shot to pieces this way."

He seemed to hesitate.

"I've had to condemn him. I'm shipping some of the new remounts back to the railroad tomorrow, the ones we've weeded out as unfit, and he'll have to go with them."

Hamelin had gone suddenly white at the verdict. So he was to lose the piebald, his friend, and the best horse in the troop. His own careful handling had made the big "red-and-white-devil" into what he knew him to be, had shown him to be; tractable, responsive, quick to answer to his voice or the pressure of his knees. With something like a gulp Hamelin saluted.

"Yes, sir," he said.

Army discipline is strong, and the captain's decisions were rarely reversed. Further, Hamelin knew that from his point of view the captain was doing the right thing, even though careless, and then probably rough treatment had caused the piebald's reversion. It was as well for Private Brewer that he was in the hospital at that moment.

ONCE outside, Hamelin brushed the back of his hand over his eyes and strode across the parade-ground toward the stables. Most of the men were out on a hike, and there was no one around to see his misery.

"Tomorrow he's goin'. Tomorrow he's goin' away from me," murmured Hamelin.

Looking neither to right nor left, he made straight for the fourth stall in the second row.

There stood the piebald. Tied up close he was, so that when Hamelin spoke to him the big horse could not get his head around, and whinnied wistfully at the familiar voice. He put a hand on the strong quarters, and a powerful hind-leg jerked forward as if in sudden defense.

"You don't want t'slam at me, old man," said Hamelin, and growled an oath deep in his chest.

Heavy welts, quirt-marks, barred the rounded barrel, and, when the piebald lipped his hand, Hamelin saw that his mouth was cut and bruised from rough hands on the heavy Army curb.

"The swine! I bet Brewer did that!" he muttered, and fell to patting the flat shoulder beside him. "Ain't even been half-cleaned. An' beatin' him up an' jerkin' his head off! Any horse that wasn't a cow'd try a come-back at that!"

Glancing around, to make sure that no one could see, the big trooper laid his head on the horse's neck.

"They're goin' t'take you away from me, an' I'm goin' t'miss you bad. In the hospital I've been thinkin' about ridin' you again. But the captain says you got t'go."

The piebald lipped his master's shoulder with gentle muzzle.

"I know you're sorry, an' it ain't your fault you busted up that bunch o' flatfeet. But it's tough, —— tough." He paused. "I wonder who'll get you now? An' you'll play the fool some more, an' they'll beat your hide off, not knowin' any different——"

Hamelin found himself speaking in a voice half-choked with sobs. Both arms were around the piebald's neck, perhaps

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because he was still weak from the hospital.

"I wish you'd understand it don't pay a horse t'get rough an' ugly—" he went on.

Came a sudden patter of hoofs across the parade-ground, and Hamelin looked out the stable window to see a native scout on a half-spent pony pull up in a cloud of dust in front of the captain's office. A moment later, like the flash of a sword, a bugle-call rang clear and sharp across the throbbing, sunlit air.

"Boots and saddles!"

Then men were running to the stables, to the harness-room, and Hamelin, forgetful of his weakness, ran with them.

"What's the matter?" he asked as he jerked his saddle from its hook.

Sergeant Kendrick, his gear on his arm, answered without looking.

"Scout just rolled in sayin' Amoroso's on this side, an' the captain's wife went out ridin' by herself a couple of hours ago, toward the river."

He disappeared on a run.

"Horse, I got t'stand up this time whether I can or not. An' you behave yourself, see?" said Private Hamelin, tightening the piebald's girths.

Swiftly he slipped on the bridle.

"T'—— with that!" he said as he unbuckled and threw away the curb-strap. "We'll give your mouth a rest, f'r once."

Then, making what speed he could, he hurried to his bunk and back, girding on his pistol and cartridge belt. In the excitement and haste nobody noticed Private Hamelin as the little squad, ten in all, mounted. Sergeant Kendrick led the captain's horse, the stirrups swinging, as they clattered up to his quarters.

Captain Thomas looked ten years older as he met them.

"Men, my wife's out by the river somewhere, and I've just had a report that Amoroso's on this side."

His eyes took in the little group, and passed, unseeing, over Hamelin and the piebald. "We've got to get her quick."

He touched his horse with his spurs.

"Forward, by fours, march! Trot!"

The squad crossed the parade-ground in a heavy cloud of dust, the rattle of accoutrements beating an accompaniment to the pounding hoofs.

"Never saw us!" Hamelin spoke in a delighted whisper. "Said I couldn't ride f'r a week, too! We'll show 'em!" And he gave to the swing and surge of the horse under him. "God help her if that skunk gets her!"

Men winced at the tales of Amoroso's treatment of captured women and girls, and the wife of a hated gringo would receive small mercy. Hamelin's heart went out in pity for the grim man at their head. The captain had been married but a few months, bringing his bride immediately to the lonely post.

It is not wise to give orders to a spirited young woman, however well-meant. The captain, without explaining the danger, had forbidden her to ride out of sight of the post unaccompanied. As a result she resolved to do that very thing, had done it, and, with equal certainty, had lost herself.

For two miles they trotted through the powder-fine dust that turned men and horses to a dull, coughing gray, striking always to the south, toward the river. The men were peering ahead through bloodshot eyes, and the soapy lather under saddle and breastplate had dried and flaked on sweaty back and shoulder before they came in sight of the thin fringe of trees that lined the river-bank.

When at last they pulled up, the horses were heaving, and the squeak and strain of the girths told of laboring lungs fighting for the sunlit, blazing air. Captain Thomas' face was lined and haggard as he lowered his glasses after five minutes of careful scrutiny up and down. Slowly he shook his head. Not a living thing was in sight. Only the shimmering heat-waves danced mockingly before them.

THEN, before he could turn in his saddle, every man there heard a faint cry, to the left, from down the river-bank.

"Men, that's Mary!" The captain's heart was in his voice. "Come on!"

His spurs drove home to the flanks of his chestnut. They wheeled and raced toward the sound, sand flying from the leader's hoofs into the faces of the men and horses behind. A hundred yards, two hundred yards, were covered.

Leaping swiftly from behind a clump of protecting trees, galloped a tall brown horse, and at his heels fifteen or twenty mounted men. On the brown was a rider whose sombrero glittered with silver, and across the saddle in front of him was thrown the gray-habited body of a woman.

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An inarticulate cry tore itself from the captain's chest as he bent low in the saddle and sent his chestnut forward at a dead run. Every man of them had recognized the horse, and the rider, and the woman. It was Amoroso himself, the captain's wife before him on his saddle.

Hamelin saw the captain draw his pistol, only to thrust it back in the holster.

"He can't shoot without hittin' her," he muttered. "We'll have t'catch 'em. An' we'll have t'hustle!"

The outlaw and his band were headed for a shallow ford half a mile up the river, not far enough for the big brown to tire under his double burden. And they had two hundred yards start. Once the ford was reached they would be safe, for enough men would be on the opposite side to swamp the little party of rescuers, or pick them off with rifle-fire as they crossed.

Amoroso's galloping followers spread fanwise on either side of their leader, and at the command the troopers took up fire as they drove forward, the bullets from their carbines throwing up spurts of dust as they plowed into the ground.

"Got him!" yelled Sergeant Kendrick as a man on the left of the line crumpled in his saddle and plunged from his seat.

At his fall the rest turned and loosed a volley at their pursuers. But shooting backward from a galloping horse does not make for accuracy, and no damage was done. A moment later, as of one accord, the band swung sharply to the right and made straight for the river, the riderless horse in their midst. The gringos' shooting was too hot when they could swim the river to safety.

But Amoroso could not, with his burden, and the deserted leader kept on for the ford, the big brown still going strong. Captain Thomas turned in his saddle as the bandits fled away.

"Let 'em go," he shouted. "We may run into a mob at the crossing."

Then from the rear of the little squad flashed a tall red-and-white horse, his ears laid flat back against his head as his rider urged him on.

"Hop to it, you big devil!" said Private Hamelin, and stride by stride the piebald overtook and passed the others, until he was racing neck and neck with the captain. "I'll catch him, sir," shouted Hamelin, as he left the sorrel behind and set sail alone, the rest pounding at his heels.

"For the love of Mike, look at that pinto travel!" gasped Sergeant Kendrick, shoving his own mount along for all he was worth, and the price of horseshoes thrown in. "An' Hamelin just out of the hospital! C'mon, you blasted oats-burner!" The last to his laboring bay.

Foot by foot the piebald was overtaking the Mexican. Scarcely a hundred yards separated them, the rest of the troop falling behind and making heavy going in the deep sand. But half the distance to the ford had been covered, and the brown showed no signs of faltering.

For the first time Hamelin touched the piebald with his spurs.

"We got t'do better," he said.

The big horse leaped convulsively and lengthened his stride, running low on the ground. The outlaw sent a swift glance over his shoulder, saw the lone man gaining on him, and suddenly dropped his reins. In one movement he drew a carbine from his saddle-sheath, took aim, and fired.

The men galloping behind saw Hamelin flinch and sway in the saddle, his left arm gone suddenly limp. Then he went forward. Amoroso, in swinging to shoot, had all but overbalanced himself. The brown swerved in his run, and the carbine flew from his rider's hands as he clung to the woman in front of him.

STRIDE by interminable stride Hamelin gained on the other, until he could see the Mexican's spurs, thrust back at every jump, red with blood from his mount's torn and bleeding flanks. A bare length separated the two as they topped a gentle rise two hundred yards from the ford, and Hamelin drew his heavy service revolver.

His left arm hung limp and useless at his side where the outlaw's bullet had shattered it, and he was guiding the piebald only by the pressure of his knees, cow-pony fashion. Suddenly he leaned forward, the big horse made a final effort, and he found himself at arm's length with the other.

Amoroso bared his yellow teeth in a furious snarl and made a sudden shift, as though to drop the unconscious woman from his saddle. Before he could move, Hamelin raised himself high in his stirrups, the pistol gripped by the barrel, and brought the butt down with all his power on the outlaw's

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head. Through the heavy sombrero and the skull beneath the blow crashed, and Amoroso crumpled in his saddle.

At the impact Hamelin dropped the weapon, his right arm struck down to the gray-habited body, and with the last of his strength he swept the captain's wife to safety on his own saddle-bow as the dead Mexican plunged from the back of the racing brown.

"All right—that'll do! Whoa!" said Hamelin weakly.

He was utterly spent. At his voice the big piebald slowed to a gallop, to a mere canter, and to a walk. As the rest of the squad whirled up, the captain still holding the lead, Hamelin went limp in the saddle, a red patch staining his left shoulder.

"Catch him, quick!" said Sergeant Kendrick, and obeyed his own order, for into his arms slid Private Hamelin, insensible, as Captain Thomas, who had jerked his horse to a quicker stop than any maneuvers call for, took his wife in his arms.

Hamelin awoke to find himself back in the hospital, and when he tried to turn, a stabbing, searing pain ran through his left side. From a great distance he heard a voice, and opened weary eyes to see Captain Thomas standing beside him.

"Hamelin, you did something for me yesterday that nothing I know of can pay for. If it hadn't been for you and that red-and-white horse I——" His voice grew husky and he cleared his throat. "You'll be glad to know that my wife is safe and sound. She wants to come and thank you herself as soon as you're strong enough to have a visitor. I told the doctor I wouldn't wait."

"Thank you, sir," murmured Private Hamelin.

The captain went on.

"I've been wondering if perhaps you wouldn't like to try for a commission," he said. "If you would, I'd like to do anything I can to help you."

Hamelin shook his head feebly.

"No, thank you, sir." Then, with visible effort, "Captain, you got your lady-wife back all right?" he asked.

The captain nodded, puzzled, and Hamelin continued:

"The piebald, sir, he did it. Will you let me keep him, sir, an' not send him away, like you said?"

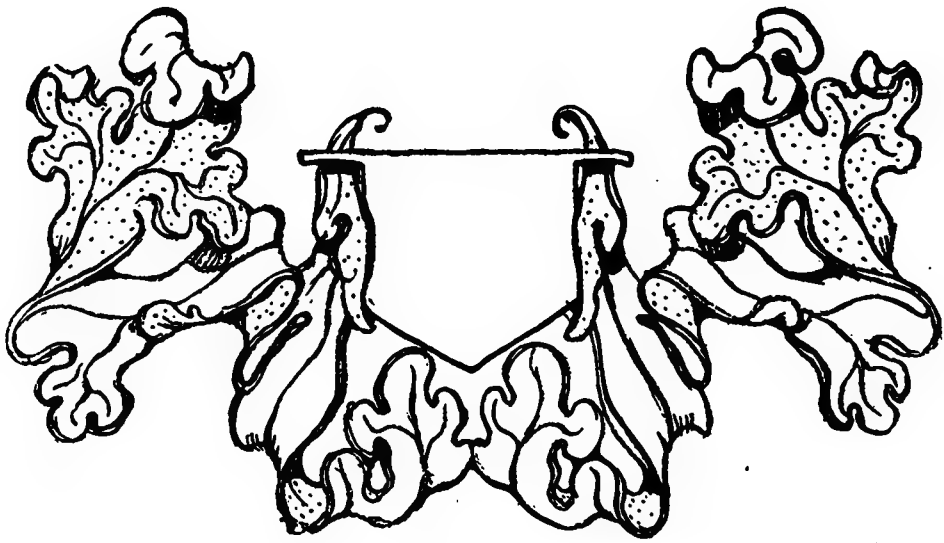
Sudden tears stung the officer's eyes.

"Hamelin, you'll keep that circus horse of yours even if they turn us into an infantry regiment and we all have to walk. I promise you!"

The ghost of a smile flitted over the pale face.

"That's what I've been wantin' most. The piebald an' me thank you, sir."

And Private Hamelin closed his eyes and went to sleep.



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As a Man Is

A Complete Novelette
by
J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Pearls of Great Price," "Monte Cristo II," etc.

DOWNING sprawled in the spattery shade of the coco-palms, eating an *aitutaki* banana. The shifting crisscross of the palm fans as they waved languidly in the puffy breeze zebra'd his frayed and soiled cotton shirt and trousers and blotched the tanned skin of his face, hands and uncovered feet to a repulsive suggestion of leprosy. With his dirt, his sprouting whiskers, his untrimmed hair and raveling raiment, he was not an inviting object.

The air was scorching to the lungs, the glaring grit of the coral beach, accentuated by the vivid pink and green of the sand vines, was painful to the eyes and Downing was prickly with the heat. He finished the fruit and, without enthusiasm, began upon another, jerking the skin of the first far to one side as a lure for the buzzing flies. His menu was not one of choice. A steady diet of bananas, even if they be *aitutakis*, or peach-bananas, soon palls. The uncooled liquor of young coconuts, to one who craves strong liquors with the perversion of long indulgence abruptly discontinued, is insipid.

A remnant of pride in what might still pass for the soul of Jim Downing had kept him from going altogether "native," from becoming the typical beach-comber, the derelict white man in a loin-cloth with an inflamed countenance bushed in long hair and greasy, matted whiskers, asleep on a mat, filled by a native woman's bounty, body and brain dead to all but the sating of the calls of sex and stomach.

Not that Jim was conscious of this fragmentary dignity. He was far from being the master of his soul, the whipper-in of that conglomerate of inherited traits and instincts that made up his present ego. His present prime sensations were that his stomach buckled for the lack of white man's food, in which he included alcohol; that he was dead-broke and that the all-powerful commissioner might imminently deport him as an undesirable resident to a far less desirable residence.

In Jim Downing heredity had ever fought with environment and now, in his lowered vitality, environment was winning in a canter. Also certain racial urges that, well gripped, might have made for manliness, had wrought his undoing. The lurking leaven of an ancient lust of travel had brought him down a-venturing between the lines of Cancer and Capricorn, his slim remnant of patrimony in his pocket, vaguely desirous of finding an island where he could "go in" for copra or cacao, for bêche-de-mer or pearls; preferably for pearls.

And a closely aligned ancestral quirk had lured him to linger in Tahiti and try his luck at cards, whereupon, in three short weeks, the shrewd traders had stripped him dry as a farrow cow. Followed lean weeks of failing credit, a job as supercargo's clerk aboard a rancid, bug-and-cockroach-ridden schooner where a sturdier flick of his spirit had rebelled and caused him to punch efficiently the jaw of the bossy little cockney who had tried to overlord him.

One pitfall he had dodged intuitively. There was in him a heritage of gentility from certain forefathers who knew themselves to be of the conquering race and would not dilute the blood of their breed by dalliance with South Sea Delilahs. Unkempt as he

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was, Jim was physically attractive enough in his twenty-seventh year to win the approval of many *tieri*-scented, voluptuous damsels who tucked the scarlet flower behind the ear as a sign that they would willingly take him to their bosoms and feed him upon golden *papaias* and floury breadfruit; on luscious, squirty mangoes; on rib-clinging paste of taro; on succulent young squid; on silver mullets and stone-oven roasted pigs; but there Jim drew the line which, he vaguely told the diminishing voice of his soul, "a chap has to draw somewhere."

At the fourth *aitutaki*, his gorge rebelled utterly. He felt vainly for the makings of a cigaret, surveyed sullenly a stone-bruise on his heel and sought solace in sleep. Late in the afternoon, two men came along the beach, stopped and watched him with the eyes of those who have found the object of a search.

The much taller and leaner of the two stuck the end of his Malakka palm-rib cane in the sand and lit a cigaret.

"Is that your man, Cammy?" he asked. "If so, I don't think much of him."

"It is the man," answered the other, a taint of accent in his fluent Anglo-American. "And he will do first-class. He has been well-educated, he has the manners of a gentleman, he has no money and I do not think he has had a drink for a long time. I tell you that I have watched him. He will do very well indeed."

He started to prod the sleeper with the Wanghae bamboo switch he carried but the other caught his arm.

"If he is a gentleman, I will handle him," he said. "You are apt to be a bit of a mucker, Cammy. And this sort won't stand for it. Wait a bit."

He hunkered down on his lean haunches, hitching up his well-creased and immaculate linen trousers so that his bony knees would not bulge them and studied the relaxed features of the sleeping Jim with the appraisal of an adept in physiognomy. The aroma of the cigaret stole up Jim's nostrils and tickled his olfactory nerves. One sense awakened, the rest reacted and he opened his eyes and lazily surveyed the strangers.

His gaze first rested upon the bulging midriff of the man addressed as Cammy. This was cased in a pleated sash of black satin, spotted by gross feeding. Jim knew it for a mock cummerbund, a fake sash, fastened in back with straps, a species of stomach-supporter that he loathed, his dislike including any man who wore one.

Nor did the rest of the outward man of Pietros Camarinos, trader in plantation produce, offset the first impression. He was short and squat with a face the hue of Morocco leather, in which grew vigorously a black and curly beard, from cheek-bone to below the collar line. He had the eyes of a woodchuck and the mouth of a satyr.

The other man who, still squatting, offered Jim a cigaret from a silver case, suited Jim better. He had eyes of a peculiar gray between sandy lashes, aquiline features in a face tanned from blond to bronze and was clad in the very finest of linen with a silk shirt of top-quality Canton and a wide-brimmed hat of white *lauhala* weave. His cigaret was excellent. His enunciation was languidly British.

"I TAKE it, old chap," he said to Jim, "that you are not over and above busy right now. What?"

Jim sat up cross-legged, tucking his naked feet under him and gratefully inhaling his cigaret in long puffs.

"You guessed it," he answered. "What's the big idea?"

"Have another cigaret and then come to dinner with us at the Plumaria."

Jim's smile faded as his fingers halted on their way to the second cigaret.

"Quit your kidding," he said curtly. "I'd look well marching into the Plumaria. Louis would tell his Kanakas to chuck me out and I might lose what clothes I've got left in the scrimmage."

"Look here, I'm not spoofing," returned the Englishman earnestly. "I take it you're a bit down on your luck. Been there myself. Point of fact, I'm out of luck now. Want you to mend yours and ours at the same time. We—Camarinos here and myself—my name is Power, Risdon Power, spelled P-o-w-e-r, pronounced Pore—need some one to help us in a little deal of which, so far, we've got the dirty end of the stick, you know. We need a gentleman, and gentlemen—as such—are rare birds in this part of the world.

"As to the Plumaria, it'll be dark in half an hour, we can go up to our rooms through the garden, my duds'll come near enough to fitting you for a makeshift and, tomorrow, if we come to terms, Chu Lung can turn you out an outfit to measure, *chop-chop*. After

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a change and a bath and a drink and dinner we'll talk it over. How about it? Are you on?"

Jim slowly sucked in the gray smoke from the second cigaret and sent it out in blue spirals from his comforted lungs.

"It's a bit sudden, this Lazarus to Dives stuff," he said. "A change and a bath and a drink and dinner! That's pretty tempting bait. You say you want a gentleman. I don't know if I answer that description or not. How about your end of it? Is it a gentleman's job? It may seem funny to you, but I have some scruples."

"The —— you have," broke in Camarinos. "Then stew in them. Here we come to you, a reef-bum, with the commissioner ready to send you on your way to Tauvu where you'll sleep in the pen with the Kanaka convicts and work with 'em on the roads and we offer to treat you like a white man. Why, you sand-louse——"

He subsided in a sharp squeak of pain as Power heeled his shin with accuracy and without mercy.

"Point's jolly well put," said the latter to Downing. "Never mind Cammy. He's a bit of a bounder. You don't know us—we don't know you. Even-Steven, what? I penetrate your disguise and recognize you for a gentleman and offer to back my opinion to a certain extent. If you don't like the proposition after we talk it over—chuck it and no harm done. But you won't object to it. Now, is it a go?"

"Go it is," said Jim, rising and advancing toward the Greek. "But—you said something about a 'sand-louse' just now. Want to take that back?"

The woodchuck eyes of Camarinos showed a crimson flash of savagery but there were two pairs against them. And his shin was still sore.

"I'll take it back," he said with an assumption of good-will. "More than that, I'll buy the drinks. Come on. Sun's setting."

Jim's tongue ran back and forth between his lips as he storked it on one leg at a time, adjusting his wrecked shoes. He was visualizing tall glasses of amber-colored liquid, glasses tinkling with ice. Power noted the manifest of his expression and his angular face gave a twitch that hid a smile. He handed Jim a third cigaret. The three fell into line on the ebb-widened beach.

"I wish to God I hadn't eaten that fourth banana," said Jim.

"Know just how you feel," said Power. "Had a week of them myself once, in an open boat. Bananas and bilge-water! Plain ——!"

The sky chameleoned swiftly and died to a purple dusk through which the star-points stabbed eagerly as the three men entered the perfume-drenched garden of the Plumaria through a postern in the high wall of coral slabs and slipped quietly up to the adjoining rooms of Power and the Greek. Jim got his highball, a shave, a hot tub and a cooling shower. Then came the clean, cool crisp of Japanese crêpe to his skin, topped by a pongee suit of Power's that fitted him fairly enough.

Followed the dinner, the securing of a room for the rehabilitated Jim next to those of Power and Camarinos and, at last, cigars and other drinks served in a little arbor at the end of the Plumaria gardens, set on a knoll apart. The odors of ihlang-ihlang and frangipani seemed as balm to Jim as, clean and content, he gazed out to where the surf creamed softly on the beach, backed by the louder drum-roll of the reef. The moon, lifting in the east, softly illumined the little arbor. Jim sat in its shine and Power out of it, with Camarinos following his partner's example.

The latter sucked noisily in his glass. Jim did not dislike the man as cordially as he had before his own revival to respectability but the Greek disgusted him, gave him the same sensation that one gets from the stealthy creep of a hairy-legged insect over the skin. It might be bad business but he resolved to ignore him and address himself entirely to Power.

He asked the latter for a match and, as the Englishman leaned forward for a few seconds in the moon-ray, Jim noticed that Power's eyes were now calculating rather than friendly. They could not be called shallow nor were they entirely opaque, but they held the frostiness of moonstones. The man's entire attitude was one of keenness, his tone was crisp.

Jim, for all his newborn confidence in himself, suddenly felt very young and inexperienced. There was a faint warning of double-dealing. He could not expect two strangers suddenly to set him on his feet out of sheer kindness and expect to repay them by a simple favor. Power was

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eminently the type who would want his *quid pro quo*. But beggars could not be choosers, Jim reflected and, so long as the affair seemed all right, he was not going to probe too deeply.

"There's a thousand dollars in it for you, Downing, if you pull it off," said Power quietly.

Jim had hard work to restrain a gasp. Here he had been deep in the scum of vagabondism, a quicksand beneath, and now the unhoped-for chance had come. What deviltry would they ask of him for a thousand dollars? The red tips of the cigars of both of them glowed evenly but Jim knew they were watching him, letting the effects of that "thousand dollars" sink deep. But —now that he was back, be it ever so temporarily, he was going to start clean. He had been an utter fool but not a blackguard. And, instinctively, he knew that neither the Greek nor Power were men of scruples.

He was a bath and shave and a dinner ahead, anyway, he told himself. He could surely use that money. But . . . .

"Shoot," he said aloud.

"I've got to make a confession that goes against the grain," said the Englishman. "I don't usually consider that I am dull-witted, and Cammy here is far from being a fool but, partly through circumstance, we have both been played for Jugginses. It isn't a long story. Did you ever hear of Sharp, Bill Sharp, the pearler, Downing?"

"I think not."

"IT DOESN'T matter. The man is well-named, however. He lives on an atoll islet about fifteen sea miles from here, called Puakiki. There is still good shell in his lagoon and he has close to a score of native boys working for him. A mixed-pickle sort of crowd that he has picked up here and there. They man his schooner between whiles.

"Sharp handles them with an iron hand and he keeps booze off his island. Otherwise his boys might not behave themselves so well. Some of them are bush-boys and some are beach-boys from the Solomons. You may know what that means. Dried heads and long-pig and all that sort of thing.

"But Sharp has them well in hand, owing to his cutting out the booze. If there was anything to drink on the island—Sharp is a teetotaller—we wouldn't send you, Downing. You have your usefulness but also your weakness. After tonight you touch nothing stronger than coconut milk till the job's through with.

"Now, Cammy and I have been partners in deals off and on and lately we've come one or two croppers—enough to reduce the working capital more than we care about. But we got wind of a lagoon that hasn't been touched for fourteen years. It used to be a big producer and it only takes seven years to renew nacre and pearls. This was a big thing. We wanted a quick clean-up to provide fuel for some other irons we had in the fire.

"Cammy was off to the westward looking after those interests. I don't know the first thing about actual pearling. I couldn't tell if the divers were shirking on me, for one thing. I'd be no good as a boss. Cammy was away and, anyway, he knows more about cacao than baroques. We needed men, we needed money and an outfit, we needed a schooner and we needed a superintendent. We had the lagoon and the lease.

"We knew about Sharp. We always thought he was all white. So I went over to Puakiki and put the thing up to him. He took hold on one-third shares for each of us. I was on the atoll with them for a while though I was like a blind kid playing marbles but Sharp seemed square enough. The first results were disappointing but Sharp told me we might strike a rich patch any day and, so long as he was game, it was up to me. I mooned about, getting in the way, I suppose, and then I ate some fish and that nearly did for me.

"Mind you, all the rest of them ate what was apparently the same kind of fish, as well as you could tell after they were cooked. But it takes a native to tell which are poisonous at certain times and which are not. I'm not saying they slipped me a bad one, but I was laid out. Sharp ran me over here for treatment. I sent word to Cammy but news is slow off the steamer routes and, when Cammy got back, it was all over.

"Took me five weeks to get on my feet and then I was weak as a cat. I didn't convalesce any faster for Sharp's news. They hadn't found any rich patches and the whole haul of shell, with some seeds and baroques and a scattering of third-rate pearls, less than twenty of them all told,

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didn't cover expenses. I was practically broke. Sharp paid my doctor's bill and was mighty decent, it seemed to me.

"Then Cammy showed up, with a little money and a lot of news. Up to you, Cammy, you tell your part of it."

Camarinos guzzled the last of the contents of his glass and threw out the little chunks of ice.

"Play bartender, Power," he said.

While the Englishman dipped fresh ice and opened Tansan to cover the measures of Scotch whisky each poured out, the Greek lit a cigar. Then he took a swig of his fresh highball.

"I too, always figured Sharp straight," he said, "but I got this straighter. Once in a great while, when they went to any port with Sharp, his boys would smuggle away some booze. The old trick of refilled cocoanuts. When they'd get caught at it Sharp would beat them up with a sting-ray whip. I called at Tamotu on my way back, that's some thirty miles from Puakiki.

"There was a poor devil of a Malaitan there, out of favor with the Tamotu folk, who are Polynesian and don't like the dinges from Malaita because of a shrewd suspicion that the visitor might have been too fond of their own relatives. They have a proverb that 'all tribes meet in Malaita' you know, meaning in the stomachs of Malaita. So this chap was an outcast. He was skin and bone and wealed with half-healed scars. He tried to get me to give him passage away from Tamotu. I did, as a matter of fact. And, of course, I got his story.

"He was the man who had last smuggled liquor to Puakiki. He had done it before and this time Sharp had lashed him with the backbone of a *hihimanu* ray until he'd nearly killed him. Somehow the poor devil made up his mind to escape and somehow he did it. Faked up a bit of a raft and got some grub, I suppose, from his pals, and started out to sea, anywhere to get away from Sharp and Puakiki. The salt water pickled his cuts and the current helped him so that he landed barely alive on Tamotu where he soon found he was not welcome.

"But—and here's where we come in—he was on our atoll when Sharp was getting after the pearls. He was just a canoeman—not a diver, or Sharp wouldn't have beaten him so badly—but he knew all that was going on. But didn't know there was anything crooked. Sharp was his boss and that's all he savvied.

"But he did know that Sharp had given orders to leave a certain part of the lagoon untouched though the head man said it was a fine patch. After Power got sent away—and the boy didn't seem to know anything about any poisoning stunt—they went right to the patch and over on Puakiki they are still talking about the haul—or were, up to the time the poor devil left it.

"Sharp, you know, like all pearling bosses, gives out extra wages and rations of tobacco or trinkets for a good find and nearly all the divers were well-fixed. Discounting everything, Sharp must have cleaned up a hundred and fifty thousand dollars after Power left and we didn't get a smell of it. He claims we still owe him for expenses but said for us not to worry about it, the thieving Yankee hound! I don't claim to be the wonder of the world as regards money but, by ——, I'm a sportsman and that hawk-faced robber——"

"Easy, Cammy," said Power, "you're shouting! A hundred and fifty thousand is a low estimate, Downing. We know there are two pairs of matched pearls that might run up to that amount alone. The point is we've been bilked and we want our whack. Aside from the money I have no desire to be considered a sucker, even by myself."

Jim was breathing a little fast. The thing had been told circumstantially. Power had been crisply emphatic, the Greek had infused a dramatic element into his recital that had been magnetic. He felt as if he had suddenly seen a glimpse of the real life of the islands. Cannibals and chicanery! Great gleaming pearls brought up by red-eyed divers, men flayed with the backbone of the sting-ray, a man floating half-concious under the stars. Yankee meeting Greek and besting him and this Englishman with the moonstone eyes whose voice was so cool yet who suggested crusted lava.

The raw, elemental romance of it! It made very much of a kid of him, he felt, as he tried to shape up on an equality with these two adventurers, these biters bitten, for, deep down, he was assured that, as they had been sinned against so, in other deals, they had sinned, but that was none of his business.

"I suppose the law——?" he queried.

Camarinos guffawed and Power laughed lightly.

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"With no proof except a Malaitan, confessedly revengeful? By the time we got the commissioner to act, and Sharp is a good friend of his, there would be no evidence. And we do not settle things in that fashion down here. We take our medicine and wait our turn. I have no desire to advertise myself as a first-class Juggins, as I have already mentioned. Neither has Cammy. Not good for business, Downing."

"Then where do I come in?" asked Jim.

"You go to Puakiki. You will land from a sloop that will call for you again in a week, after it has made its trip to Tamotu with supplies and reloaded. You are a pearl-buyer. We will outfit you properly. All connection with us will be eliminated from your visit. And all you have to do is to find out where Sharp keeps his pearls!"

POWER had lowered his voice. Both he and Cammy were leaning forward. The atmosphere of the little arbor had lost all conviviality. Business dominnated.

"But I know nothing about pearls," demurred Jim. "He'd be on to me in a minute."

Power moved his glass impatiently.

"We've worked out all the details, Downing," he said. "You don't have to know anything about pearls. You will go there suitably equipped and looking the gentleman, as you will act it. You have come from Tahiti. You are the buyer for a special commission. Certain pearls needed to complete a necklace. You know what you want. The less you say about the size and color of what your supposed needs are, the less you talk pearls, the less you handle them, the more secure is your position. Sharp will respect you as a young man who knows his business and keeps it to himself.

"You can turn down all his pearls without comment. That will be the best thing to do. Simply thank him and tell he hasn't got what you want. Being a matter of matching he will understand. No use wasting time. You are not a general buyer. Might be later. Make yourself generally pleasant. Take over cigars. Sharp is a bug on good cigars and he is always liable to be low of stock. He don't drink and you won't. We'll see there isn't any smuggling into Puakiki this trip."

The callous way in which Power spoke of Jim's weakness and the precautions they would take to insure against it somehow helped to convince Downing that the affair was as they had stated it.

"Though I've been to Puakiki I didn't find out where Sharp keeps his pearls," went on the Englishman. "I wasn't buying any, he knew I didn't have the price and he wasn't showing his goods. He's a fox. I didn't see any safe, but then I wasn't looking particularly for one. It is certain that he has a safe place for them and it is equally certain that if we walked in on him and accused him he would tell us to go to blazes, if he didn't simply laugh at us. And he's the kind of man that wouldn't come through at gun-point."

The voice of Power hardened here. Jim understood that Power had thought of that possibility and turned it down.

"But you find out where they are and we'll do the rest. We'll give you three days in which to earn your thousand dollars. We'll give you two hundred down and the rest you'll have to wait for until we realize on the pearls. That won't be very long," added Power grimly. "We'll give you an undertaking in writing and leave it in escrow with Louis here at the Plumaria. Will that satisfy you?"

Downing, reflecting, was not sure that it did. But two hundred in cash would go a long way. If Louis played a trick, then he, Downing, restored to respectability, with two hundred dollars as a sign of visible support, and sober, could loose the news of Power and Camarinos having been played for suckers, in case of bad faith. And the two hundred in cash looked like a million, just then. It would get him home to God's country, at any rate, and he was not without friends who would be glad to help any signs of returning self-respect.

"It's a go," he said. "What else do I have to do?"

He was sensible that, in the moted dusk, both the men issued a sigh of contentment or relief.

"It's very simple," said Power. "Puakiki is shaped like an exclamation-point. One main stretch of land and a little islet inside the reef. Sharp lives at the end opposite from the islet, on a peninsula. His men are in a village midway on the leeward side. To windward the reef runs in close. There is one landing but not good enough for any wharf work and it isn't used.

"On the night of the day you find out

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where he keeps his pearls you get over to the windward side, close to the islet, and set off a green Coston light that we'll give you to take over in your grip. There's a sharp embankment there and high bush and palms on top of the rise. No danger of the light being seen if you're careful about getting alone to the place.

"We'll be hanging off and on every night in a launch. We'll flash a light three times. Then you wait till we come in. The landing is close there. You can't miss it because there's an old shed on the beach. Tell us what you know about the place where the pearls are and then you can go back to Sharp's little bungalow and be surprized when the fireworks start. This isn't the only way we've figured on making Sharp come through, Downing, but its the easiest and we'll try it. We'll get your clothes and outfit tomorrow and go over the details. The sloop starts—when, Cammy?"

"Whenever I want it to," said the Greek. "I own that boat, though nobody knows it outside of the man who is supposed to—and myself."

"Good. Then we'll finish the bottle and then—just one tomorrow morning for an eye-opener and no more for you, Downing."

"No more is right. I'm off the stuff."

Nevertheless Jim went to bed more or less fuddled. But he had two hundred dollars under his pillow and it was there in the morning to endorse his commitment. He could not be sure whether the tale rang true or not but Power was so eminently well-bred and agreeable that, coupled with the fact that his own work to do was almost commonplace, certainly not criminal, doubts left him. He refused the eye-opener after a shower-bath. Power looked at him with a certain measure of approval and patted him on the back. And Jim thrilled to the appreciation. Once more he was a factor in something forward and he ached to make good.

He landed at Puakiki at sunset, a lonely atoll set about with hissing surf, its waving palm-tops melancholy in their rustling as the little sloop came up short to its anchor in the lagoon where no sign of life was visible save one curling thread of smoke, almost motionless, like a bit of gray worsted against the green.

Then a tall man in whites emerged from the bush and walked down the little wharf, hailing the sloop.

"A visitor for you, Mr. Sharp," called back the skipper, a man who called himself "Portuguese Joe" and plied his little craft as an irregular ferry and delivery-boat between the islands.

"I'll send a boat," shouted Sharp and then turned with a curt order.

Instantly the bush vomited life. Eight natives, loin-clothed, ran briskly to a beached whale-boat and launched her. Sharp got in the stern and took the steering-oar. Four men bent the blades of ash and the double-ender seethed through the water toward the sloop as the other quartet hunkered on the sand to await the landing.

"Some discipline," thought Jim as the whale-boat came smartly alongside and Sharp sprang lightly over the low freeboard.

"Hawk-faced," Camarinos had called him. Sharp was as tall as Jim and perhaps twice his age. He was eminently fit, lean to dryness, with a face almost square, the lines of the lower jaw seeming to run back horizontal from the chin and ending in two lumps of muscle. His eyes were hazel, straight-staring, dominating. The face was that of a falcon. "A hard man to cross," Jim fancied, as Sharp came to him where he stood immaculate in the clothes made hurriedly but none the less well by the Chinese tailor.

"Name?" asked Sharp, advancing with outstretched hand.

"Harvey," said Jim. "Charles Harvey." It had been thought possible that Sharp might have heard of Jim Downing, wastrel, and the chance was eliminated. "I heard of you from Regnier in Tahiti. I am looking for a pearl or so to complete a special commission. Renier fancied you might have what I wanted. The sloop will call for me again on its way from Tamotu if you can put up with me that long?"

"Surely. Joe, you'll want to make the tide. It's turning. I won't ask you ashore. Will you get into the stern, Mr. Harvey? Where's your dunnage?"

FIVE minutes later Jim was walking up the beach beside his host. The natives had all disappeared but Jim held a clear vision of them. Dark, almost negroid, with kinky hair. Little forehead, less chin. Loose mouths well-filled with shark-teeth, filed to points. Pig-eyes. Ears stretched until they were flabby flaps, stuck with brass rings, circles of shell, clay

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pipes and empty cartridge-shells. Some of them had bands of shell shoved through the septum of the nose.

Nearly all were cicatriced with long scars on limbs or body. Wounds, thought Jim, and then remembered the sting-ray whip. Undoubtedly Sharp looked as if he could and would use one on occasion. It was no wonder that Power and Camarinos wanted to go the easiest way to work to recover. A hard man, Sharp, and a clever one, though he was affable enough.

"Can't offer you a drink, Mr. Harvey," he said. "Can't keep the stuff here. Don't use it myself and my boys are a rough lot even when sober. Sorry—but perhaps you are self-provided?"

"I don't touch it, thank you." Jim was conscious of a keen look.

"You're wise. Rotten medicine for white men in the tropics. I can give you something good to eat though. Here's my shack."

It was not a shack. To Jim, little as he knew of the edifices of South Sea traders, it came as a surprize. In a gently sloping bowl of green wild-grass, starred with yellow blossoms, stood a one-story bungalow, shingled, verandaed, draped with vines that were a riot of purple and orange, bougainvillia and *huapala*. There were striped awnings out, there were curtains at the windows, a white-garbed Chinaman was carrying something 'round the rear of the place in a pan that flashed like silver. Jim gasped.

"Like it?" asked Sharp.

"It startled me a bit," said Jim. "If it wasn't for the coco-palms I could imagine this was California."

Again Sharp flashed a look at him.

"Come from California?" he asked.

"Originally," said Jim and they went up the low steps to the broad front porch.

There was a hammock there under a canvas shade, a little table set with tea-things.

"Does himself pretty nicely," thought Jim and then noticed that, on the table, were places for two.

"Sighted the sloop," said Sharp. "Expected company though Joe isn't strong for tea. But we'll have it inside. I never eat dinner until late this time of year."

He called an order out for "Wing" and the Chinaman appeared, hardly glancing at Jim.

"Tea is here," said Sharp.

Wing went silently, sleekly, outside and took the tray 'round to the rear. Jim wondered idly why he hadn't brought it directly in, but his host was ushering him into a bedroom, furnished with white enamel.

"Next to mine," he said. "Bath in between. We've got lots of water here. You might like a shower and a change. Joe's sloop is inclined to be grimy as well as smelly."

Decidedly Sharp did himself well, Jim thought. There were flowers in a little bowl on the dresser. Jim unpacked his grip that Wing had brought and laid out his toilet articles on the spotless spread. Spotless, yet? His brush picked up something that clung to it and glistened like a thread of gold—the long, fine silky hair of a woman. Jim whistled softly. The tea-things had not been set for him. Sharp must be married. For some reason his wife had not appeared. But of course there was time. And it was none of his business. But, if Sharp's room adjoined his, with the shower in between and the farther door ajar, as it was, with Sharp moving about behind it, why had the woman been dispossessed for the casual visitor.

There was no sign of a woman at dinner. No mention. But, to Jim's fancy, the house held numerous signs of a woman's taste. After all, Sharp was an odd chap. Jim had no real credentials. White men down here were not displaying their womenfolk to every stranger. Why should they? So that was all right and quite natural, he decided over a cigar.

They smoked out on the veranda after dinner, in the moonlight. From beyond the bowl, masked by the luxuriant verdure, came the crooning of barbaric chants, softened by the distance, not the melodious *meles* and *himinis* Jim had heard in and about Tahiti, but songs that, for all their diminution, held more than a suggestion of savagery.

"Shall we leave the question of the pearls until tomorrow?" asked Sharp. "I suppose you prefer to buy in daylight, but it will be no trouble to show them to you. I have quite a number of selected ones on hand, waiting for an advance," he finished, laughing. "By the way, what is the market like in Tahiti?"

"It doesn't vary a great deal," said Jim, somewhat at a venture. "I should *like to* see them tonight very much," he added. "I have heard much of your selection."

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He decided that, by leaving it until tomorrow, Sharp might have opportunity to get the pearls from wherever he kept them without giving him any chance to locate the place. Sharp impressed him as a hard man, further than that he could not read him. The man might be crook or honorable to the last desgree. Jim was too much of a tyro in life to appraise this type of person.

"Very well," said Sharp. "Sit still. I'll call you."

The veranda was boxed in on three sides by the front of the bungalow and two projecting wings. Sharp had arranged a little patio with a pool in front that heightened the suggestion of California and Jim took it in with eyes that were narrowed and thoughts a trifle bitter. It was in California that he had gone to smash. Some day he would go back and . . . .

Then he roused to action with the front door closing as Sharp went in. Glancing behind he could see the tall figure passing through the main living-room in which they had dined and going toward the adjoining one, all part of the main building. From a word Sharp had let fall he knew this was the library. At the time this extra hint of Sharp's comparative luxuriousness had led him to wonder whether Sharp were not a resident of this speck of South Sea tenure from a desire to live—or hide—away from the civilization he still strove to surround himself with.

He had rubber-soled shoes—a precaution of Power—and he rose and took long steps toward the windows that were suddenly illumined in the library. The veranda boards squeaked slightly and the blood started to pump in his veins. He was in the game, the first hand was dealt, the first cards were on the table. With rapid strides he reached the frame of the window and then, that blind, and then the next, were smartly drawn down. He had lost the first trick. He retreated to the door and thought of entering the main room and following his host on some pretext but he could not conjure up a good one and Sharp was not the man to be blind to a flimsy excuse.

As he stood, uncertain, something came just within the extreme angle of his vision. He hardly saw it, merely obliquely sensed it until he slightly turned his head. In the window of the left wing that faced the veranda the curtains were moving, ever so slightly, and he imagined that he saw a hand that vanished instantly.

At the same time he realized that he was standing hatless in the full moonlight. Not that that mattered so much. He would be known as the only one on the veranda, in any case, but he was certain that he, spying on Sharp, had been in turn espied.

He slid back to his chair and relit his cigar that had gone out. He remembered the short ash on it when he got up. That was gone, doubtless spilled close to the window. What a clumsy ass he was, he thought, and strove to appear at ease as Sharp came to the door and called him. Try as he would, he could not force back to his heart the quickening blood that he knew was crimsoning his tan.

BUT Sharp did not appear to notice anything. Under the hanging lamp on the table cleared by Wing, Sharp was setting down a casket made of dark, polished wood, capped with a carven lid of Polynesian design. There was a square of black velvet in the center of the table. Sharp motioned him to a seat and took one opposite. From his left-hand pocket he took out a metal box and opened it with a snap of the vulcanite lid.

"I keep my specials separately, Mr. Harvey," he said.

Between two sheets of cotton, wadded between tissue-paper, showed several spheres of prismatic glow. One of these Sharp gently rolled on to the center of the velvet cloth. Against the black it gleamed with a soft, fuzzy luster, a pearl almost as large as a marble, a perfect sphere of all colors, rainbow hues softened to the indescribable sheen that makes up the "pure white" pearl.

"What do you think of that?" asked Sharp. "I don't know if that is just what you are looking for, but that is the kind of pearls we have on Puakiki. Did you ever see one more perfect?"

Not quite sure of what to do to uphold his position as an expert, Jim gently pulled the square of velvet toward him, took up the pearl and laid it in the palm of his left hand, surveying it with what he deemed a sufficient mixture of admiration and the deprecation of one who has seen and handled many rare gems. He wondered what this was worth and whether it was one of the pearls stolen from Tamotu.

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"What do you think of it?" asked Sharp.

"It is not what I am looking for," Jim answered.

"But you do not deny its perfection? It has the fairness of a fresh-water and all the fire of the twenty-fathom lagoon beauties. You will honor me with your opinion. What do you think of it?"

Jim surveyed the sphere once more and let it roll back on to the cloth.

"Perfect," he said.

There was no question as to the correctness of that answer. And his host, in whose keen face enthusiasm shone, evidently expected it.

"Well, I'll show you what I think of it," said Sharp.

His hand suddenly dipped in his right-hand coat-pocket, dipped and came out too swiftly for Jim to follow. And in it was a squat automatic. With the butt of the automatic Sharp deliberately hit the pearl. It crushed into a waxy paste with all its iridescence faded.

"That's what I think of it, Mr. Jim Downing," said Sharp. "Don't move. I want to tell you what I think of you."

Jim sat astounded, his eyes focused on the cold, blue barrel of the unwavering gun. Who had given him away? The waving curtain, the hand at the window? But his actions could have been explained away. How had they got his name?

"When a man," Sharp was saying, "comes to an out-of-the-way island like Puakiki under an assumed name, when he trespasses thus and essays to spy on his host, when he pretends to be a pearl-buyer and doesn't know a bleak-scale from the real article; then, Jim Downing, we of these seas are very apt to take judgment and punishment into our own hands. Most people, the majority that counts, would hold me guiltless if I shot you and gave any explanation I chose of your actions. You are known as a wastrel. Even I have heard of you. Here under false colors, your lack of reputation would save me any excuse.

"There are two things keeping me from snap justice. One, I want the true reason of your visit. You haven't cooked this up by yourself. You haven't got the nerve."

Jim tried to brace himself. His nerves cried out for a drink. He had never needed one so badly in his life, he thought. Yet this man with the face of a falcon was accusing him of things far less than he had committed. He was running a bluff Well then, it was up to Jim to counter it. Sharp had the gun. He had uncovered his alias. It was very likely true that he could take the law into his own hands and get away with it. But why sit like a man with the palsy? Was he an utter coward? The better part of his heritage came back to him. If it was to be a one-sided fight he could still fight the best he could.

"It is easy to sneer about nerves when you are holding the gun," he said. "I am going to tell you what brought me here, Mr. Sharp. Not because I am afraid of you," he rapped out, "but so that I can tell you what I think of you."

Sharp looked straight at him with eyes that, blazing as they were with determination, seemed to hold a hint of humor.

"I'll take back what I said about your nerve, Downing," he said. "I had no right to say it, really, knowing what I do about you?"

What did he mean by that? thought Downing.

"Hop to it," went on Sharp, laying down the pistol, quite close to his hand though, Jim noticed. "You needn't even mention names unless you want to. Some one has been humbugging you, my lad."

Jim hopped to it, somewhat hotly, though before the steady gaze and half-smile of Sharp he felt the conviction dying out of him. He ended almost shamefacedly.

For a moment Sharp said nothing. Then he put away the gun.

"Power and Camarinos!" he said at last, his voice pregnant with amused scorn. "I'll let you get your own opinion of them after you go back, Downing. Ask the commissioner. Ask any reputable trader. You couldn't have, in the shape you were, of course, even if you had thought of it."

He took off the carved lid of the casket and showed Jim that it was filled with necklaces of sea-shells and black and red seeds.

"My stepdaughter's," he said. "Now, Jim, you and I'll light up a fresh cigar and talk this over outside."

With an utter change of manner he linked his arm in the wondering Jim's and led him on the veranda. The change to the use of his Christian name, the not-to-be-doubted kindliness of Sharp, completely foundered Jim. He took the light his host offered and, as he put it to the end of his cigar, noticed that Sharp was letting his own match burn

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down without using it. His head was turned a little, alert for sound. There was nothing Jim could notice but the chanting of the natives and then he caught a change in the rhythm, a prolonging of the notes, the beat of a drum.

"I'll have to go over there presently," said Sharp, as if to himself. "Too much bobbery for this time of night. You say that Power suggested there might be another way to make me come through with my cache?" he asked as he struck another match.

"Yes. I can't guess what. Power said you were not the man to come through even with gun-play—like I did."

"Humph! They were to give you three days in which to show a light?"

"Yes."

"They may stick by that. Jim, you went to Stanford University, didn't you? At Palo Alto?"

"I went there. And left at the end of my first year."

Jim's puzzlement was growing greater. What did Sharp know about him? And what an infant he was beside the man. One thing he was positive of. Sharp was not a thief. Gross-stomached Camarinos, guzzling at dish and in glass, Power with his moonstone eyes; these were the rascals, he the fool absolute.

"I AM a widower, Downing," said Sharp, still seeming to listen to the beat of the drum, the rising and falling wail of the natives. "I have no children. My wife had a daughter when I married her. She was born in California. So was my wife. They lived in the foothills back of Palo Alto, for my wife was ailing and I wanted my daughter—for so I call and esteem her—to be educated there. She was about to enter Stanford. But her mother grew worse and finally died and she came back to me, quite recently, on the yacht of a friend. I do not—I did not—think it was generally known that she had returned.

"My daughter rode horseback a good deal."

He paused. The character of the chanting had changed again. The drum-beats were more emphatic, the wailing rhythm had turned into long ululations. Sharp frowned and went on more rapidly. Jim listened eagerly. He knew now what was coming.

"There was a carload of youngish chaps driving furiously one day, not far from my wife's home. The one who owned the car had been sent down from the university for —for getting drunk, I believe. It had grown to be a habit with him, this liquidation of the money an honorable father had left him. In the eyes of some of the collegians he was a good deal of a hero in consequence when he drove down to Palo Alto from San Francisco.

"He was pretty drunk, I imagine, that day. My daughter's spirited brute took fright at the red car coming tearing 'round a curve and some of the men shouted in a reckless way when the horse bolted. But the driver and owner of the car, Jim, put on the brakes and ran down the steep hill after the girl and the horse.

"He stopped them on the brink of a bad pitch—broke his arm doing it when the horse lashed him—but he saved her life. They took him to my wife's house and put him to bed at the girl's solicitation. He told something of himself. He was pretty much ashamed at the time, but the girl thought a good deal of him, Jim, and tried to steady him.

"She thought she had, but, one day, she saw him roaring drunk in a San Francisco restaurant—and that was the last she knew of him until she recognized him as he came up to the bungalow this evening. I was grateful, too, Jim, and sorry for him because he had shown he had good stuff in him.

"So you see I figure I owe you something. If you think you owe me anything, call it quits and we'll line up for a new start. How about it, Jim? We live a pretty clean life on Puakiki, we don't drink and there's work that you can do."

Jim gripped the hand Sharp held out.

"It's not quits, sir, by a long shot. Of course I never dreamed that Mary Leigh was your daughter! I was a gullible ass. But I can do something. I can go down now and set off that Coston light and we can handle them when they come in. I'll testify against them, I'll——"

He broke off as some one came on to the veranda. It was Mary Leigh, slender, golden-haired and twenty, with a nod and a smile and a slim hand out for Jim.

"I saw that you and father were on friendly terms," she said. "Is it all right, dad?"

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Sharp nodded.

"Come inside, Mary, and we'll tell you all about it," he said. And in very few words that managed to carry the idea that Jim had done them a favor, Sharp outlined to his daughter what had happened. He spoke to her much as a man might to his son, Jim noticed, without mincing matters.

"I think Jim's idea of setting off the signal may be a good one," said Sharp. "But first I want to go down and see what the boys are all worked up about. They are making altogether too much row. Jim, you can come along. Get your Coston light. We'll arm up a bit. The gun-case is in the other room. Wing'll stay here with Mary. He's as good a man and as good a shot as either of us. Also he owes me two lives. Saved him and his brother once and it's on their books to my credit. Mary, go and change that dress for something dark and put on your bathing suit underneath. Get an automatic greased up."

She looked at Sharp questioningly but went to obey. Sharp and Jim went into the library and selected rifles and pistols from a well-supplied armory. Sharp called for Wing and the Chinaman appeared on the instant.

"You stay along Miss Mary, Wing," ordered his master. "Suppose you hear shots, you make her go water-cave, tell her my order. Then you come along join us. *Sabe?*"

"Plenty," assented Wing with a quick-lipped grin and agate eyes that sparkled.

In turn he went to the arms-case and made his choice of weapons.

"Better put on a belt and fill it up with cartridges," said Sharp to Jim. "Fill your pockets, too. Can't tell what'll happen. I seem to sniff trouble. Best to be prepared, like Wing. Best man I ever had behind me in a fight. Always has something up his sleeve. Usually a knife. Ready? Then go get your Coston."

When Jim came out of his room with the signal-light Mary had changed to a short skirt of blue serge with a dark waist. Her golden hair was tucked into a golf cap. She smiled again at Jim.

"Wish I could come with you," she said.

"Nothing doing, young lady," said Sharp. "Wing has the orders. You may not have to stir. Come on, Jim."

They kept to the shadows until they were clear of the bungalow and climbing the side of the bowl that formed the little promontory Sharp had selected for his house-site. The grass was almost shoulder-high where it had been left untrimmed and it was slippery and cumbersome going. On the rim of the bowl at the neck of the promontory, a strip less than a quarter of a mile wide, thick with pandanus and kindred growth, Sharp halted. The revelry of the native boys was very plain now. The drums were pattering out a booming volley and once in a while a shrill howl topped the rest. Under the moon that was sailing full and high Sharp's face was stern. He led the way swiftly along a little path that ran along the backbone of Puakiki, his figure ghostlike in the gloom under the trees, and Jim followed as best he could.

Suddenly Sharp stopped, holding one arm back to retard Downing. Together they peered through the branches down to where a little stream had made a miniature delta on the beach. There was a tiny lake set with sandy knolls and with a clear strip of sand circling it, bordered in turn by *hula* and pandanus that hid the site of the native village from the beach proper.

A fire was lit, a ruddy fire of dried palm branch and husk that threw out brilliant vermilion lights and about this danced a score of savages, knees up, heads back, capering and leaping, howling like moon-struck dogs. Two sat to one side drumming on hollow stumps covered with shark-skin. Almost every man had a bottle, of unmistakable shape, square-faced.

"Power and Camarinos haven't waited their three days, Jim," whispered Sharp. "They think they've seen a way to chisel you out of the thousand dollars. This was the other method they spoke of. To get liquor to my boys. The utter fools, so many children playing with matches about a powder barrel!

"I'd like to know how much gin those boys have got hold of. Probably was floated in to them on a raft with the flood or landed somewhere after dark where they would be sure to find it. Power knows the general lay of Puakiki. He was here once, though not in the manner he cooked up to you. I don't imagine," went on Sharp slowly, as if thinking aloud, "that they would have risked giving the gin over in person. Some of my boys would have told me before they broached the case. Now that they have all started it's hard to say

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where they'll stop. Malays, you know, gone amuck with liquor! I suppose Power figured he'd render them neutral and ——

"By ——, Jim, Power has got wind of Mary being on the island! He figures at getting at me and the pearls through her. They'll be ashore now. Power and Cammy and others, Portuguese Joe probably. And those devils dancing down there out of hand!"

DOWNING felt himself tauten all over. Power and the Greek and their hirelings already landed, creeping through the dark to surround the bungalow and seize Mary Leigh. Through her to coerce Sharp into giving up his pearls. And the prancing natives, mad with crude gin—who could tell what they might do?

"Shall I fire—for Wing and Mary to hear?" he asked.

"I daren't do it," answered Sharp. "A shot might act with those natives like a match to gasoline. They are on the raw edge now. No saying what they may do. Race stuff. Anything white will be game for their hunting if they start. But we'll hurry along. I figure Power and his gang will wait until they think we are in bed at the bungalow before they try a raid. And Wing is there. Come on."

They jogged back over the trail through the muggy night, streaming with perspiration from their efforts. Jim wished he could hold Sharp's confidence in Wing as a guardian. And he was afraid—more, he sensed that Sharp was afraid—of what might happen when the primal lusts of the carousing Melanesians broke loose, that crowd of cannibals and riffraff of the seas that Sharp had held with such strict mastery.

An explosion of yells cracked the night air and Sharp mended his pace. They were close to the narrow neck that joined the promontory where the bungalow was built to the mainland of Puakiki, practically on the highest land of the islet. The shouts of the natives were appreciably nearer and, as Sharp and Jim gazed fearfully down through the gaps in the foliage they saw what they had secretly feared, the mad band of the natives running amuck along the beach. Their cries came up, exultant, threatening, horrible:

"Eyah! White Mary! Eyah-ha-ah-ah!"

Jim sensed as well as Sharp what those shrill ululations meant. He had been long enough in those latitudes to know that every white woman was a "white Mary" in beach English but the coincidence of the true name made the thing more ghastly. Ahead of him, Sharp fired his rifle twice from the hip as a signal and then knelt, pressing on Jim's shoulder to do the same and started to pick off those leaping, naked savages, tearing along the beach in the moonlight.

Jim saw a slim figure, like a boy's, break from the veranda bungalow and fly beachward toward the end of the promontory. It was Mary, obedient to orders, running for more than life to the shelter of her water-cave. The lithe figure in the one-piece suit was plain for an instant and then plunged into shadow. Another figure detached itself and came toward them, deep in the wild grass. All this in an instant and then Jim settled down to firing at the swiftly moving targets.

"Make it five hundred yards," snapped Sharp. "Got one of them, thank God!"

A wild figure leaped and slopped on the sands. It was the leader but the others jumped the body and raced on with a fierce howl that Jim knew must be a view-halloo. Another sprawled, by whose rifle none knew. Wing was now firing, half-way up the slope of the bowl on his way to join them. The savages fled fast in that mad Marathon but the girl had a good start and ran like Atalanta.

There was a little crescent of silvery sand close to the cape that ended eastern Puakiki and Jim glimpsed the scudding figure of the girl traversing it at a tangent toward the still lagoon that was dotted there with great clumps of rock. A hundred yards behind her came the van of the sensuous savages.

"She'll make it," cried Sharp. "Oh, good girl! They've got no weapons but a knife or two. There she goes, Jim! She's safe!"

There was the silhouette of Mary Leigh poised on a rock up which she had bounded. Then the arched body, diving. Silver ripples that died out. A knot of natives baffled, raging, until the bullets began to spit among them.

"It's her own cave," said Sharp. "She discovered it. Entrance under water. She's safe, Jim! She's safe!"

Wing came up to them, noiseless, clad now in close-fitting tunic and trousers of

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dark gray silk, tucked into his felted shoes, a black handkerchief bound slickly about his head.

"Two, maybe three white men they come," he announced. "I see them against sky all same like shadow, topside of hill. Then they start down through bush. Me, I all same make leady tell missy to lun fo' cave—same time you shoot—then she lun. Me, I come up hill."

"They were to come in a launch," said Jim. "They would have landed on the windward side where the old shed is they told me about. I can run a launch, Mr. Sharp, and——"

"Yes, that's the thing," Sharp replied. "There is a landing there, the only windward opening in the reef, easy to pass this kind of weather. We'll try it. Mary is perfectly safe for the time. None of the boys know about her cave. She made sure of that.

"We'll double-cross Power," he went on in a low voice as they hurried along the dim trail. "It's a three-cornered game. The native boys will be up to any deviltry against all us whites. Power isn't the kind to quit trying for the pearls—there's a bit of the bulldog in the man—and I should like to thank Power personally for this evening's entertainment. Power and Cammy, both. There's a trail down to the beach to your left, Jim."

As they dipped into the bush, cut for copra-carriers but long disused so that tangled creepers trapped every step, Jim heard a familiar sound. *Put-put-putter-a!* And then, *pfsstt!*

"Some one trying to make a getaway on the launch," he whispered. "And they've got engine trouble. Come on!"

Jim Downing was neither in the best of condition, nor the worst. With the exception of the interlude at the Plumaria, he had had nothing alcoholic to drink for nearly three weeks. He had been well-fed for several meals. He had got back much of his self-respect. Tonight's happening had not been brought about by any act of his and he was anxious to make good with Sharp—and with the girl. At such times the blood pumps reserves of fibrin into the muscles under the stimulus of the spirit and men break records.

Jim went leaping down that declivity, miraculously escaping loops and snares of trailing vines, at a pace that left both Sharp and Wing far behind. At any moment the man who was monkeying with the engine might get it into commission and make for the open sea. That he was willing to treacherously desert his comrades, in fright at the firing and the yelling of the natives, seemed apparent. With the launch gone there would be nothing left for them but to play in the grisly game of tag with the lust-drunk natives against all and the two parties of whites against each other and the savages.

And all through it Mary Leigh must stay alone, perdu in her water-cave. Jim hoped she could not have heard the shots and be trembling with the sickening fear of disaster for her stepfather—perhaps for Jim—with the knowledge that, if the worst came to the worst—she must starve, drown in her retreat or face a fate the mere suggestion of which gave such impetus to Jim's powers as an engine gains when the driver steps on the gas.

OUT of the forest tangle at last he came to the narrow, grassy brink of a ledge that fell abruptly in a cliff of lava, some twenty feet to the scrap of beach that formed the windward strand of Puakiki. He could see the outlines of the moldering shed, the strip of lagoon water like molten silver, dotted with masses of rock. Beside one of these coral boulders, forming a natural dock, there lay a launch, half its length hooded for the engine. A lantern twinkled amidships and he could make out a dim bulk stooping by the light, fussing with the machinery.

Put-put-putter-puttera—pfss-tt!

Jim blessed the defect in the engine or the deficiency in the man's mastery of mechanics that delayed the game. But he had lost the semblance of path and there was no time to waste finding it. Back and to his right he could hear the soft lunges of Sharp and Wing in the bush.

To drop the twenty-odd feet meant disaster. There were loose rocks at the foot of the cliff, jagged, honeycombed, treacherous. To the right a century-plant spiked up, its stem, springing from the bayonets of leaves, almost as big as that of a young birch. A mass of panicled flowers proclaimed that sap and elasticity were still in the stem. Belly down, Jim reached the tip and pulled it toward him.

The next instant he was sliding fast in a

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shower of petals and pollen, drenched with musky perfume. He crashed through the leaves, sped over the sand and out on the long rock. The moorings had been cast off, the engine was beginning to cough with some suggestion of regularity and the launch was moving clear.

It was a good take-off and Jim had achieved a running start. He landed in the bottom of the launch and half-leaped, half-fell upon the stooping figure still busy with the engine, absorbed until the tilting of the launch warned him of something untoward and imminent.

He twisted, a heavy, bearlike man, with cumbersome agility and Jim, in the exaltation of the mêlée, laughed as he recognized the bearded face of Camarinos, with the woodchuck eyes gleaming viciously. He slammed home a short-arm jolt with all his force to the solar-plexus, fair in the center of that black satin cummerbund that he abominated, felt the drive of his blow sing through the pulpy cushion of fat and jar against the diaphragmatic ganglia.

Camarinos gave a puffy gasp and collapsed, his gross face distorted. Jim jumped to the clutch and brought the launch back to the rock landing down which Sharp and Wing were running.

"Cammy, making his little getaway from trouble," said Jim. "We'd better tie him up and take him along, hadn't we, or shall we leave him behind as a souvenir?"

"Plain murder if we did," said Sharp. "His pals are in trouble now."

Shots were sounding in a smart rally amid a chorus of yells. Sharp steered the launch outside the entrance and Jim slowed down as they all turned to watch the land.

"Power and whoever's with him have made the bungalow," commented Sharp. "Looking for the pearls, which they won't find. The Kanakas are rushing them. Look at that. They've set it on fire."

A bright flare showed at the eastern end of the island. It died down and then brightened. A great cry of shrill howls sprang up. The sound seemed to divide and part of it to come toward the landing. Now and then a shot sounded.

"Got 'em on the run," said Sharp laconically. "They're making for the launch."

Jim noticed his narrowed eyes and hard-set jaw as the pearl-trader seemed to be struggling for decision.

"It's their own mess," he said. "Power wouldn't have stopped short of anything to get what he was after, but we can't let 'em be cut up by those —— niggers. Speed her up, Jim, we'll put back."

The launch swung in a circle for the opening again as a hullaballoo broke out on the cliff above the landing. A dusky, shifting confusion of forms detached itself from the trees. Ahead of the jubilant savages a man reached the brink close to where Jim had descended. Out of the shadow flashed a streak of light—a spear. The man's body hid it as it thudded home and he jumped convulsively up and out, pierced through and through, smashing to the rocks in a lifeless bundle.

"——," muttered Sharp. "Now where did they have those spears hidden away?"

Spurts of flaring powder gas showed that at least one other white man was putting up a desperate fight and also that some of the natives had got hold of the remaining guns in the bungalow—and knew how to use them. But the end came swiftly. Before those in the launch could use their rifles to break up the savages, locked together, white and Melanesian, two men whirled down a slope, across the brink, over the cliff, the rocks and rolled, slowly, out on the white sand, distinct, so that from the launch they could see one arm lift feebly and then drop inert. Instantly the shouting ceased and all the natives vanished in the trees, followed by a scattering volley from the launch.

"Two they were chasing and two they got," said Sharp, and steered back to the beach.

There was no life in any one of the three. It was Portuguese Joe who had been speared. The man who had wrestled, Sharp identified as Lycurgus, a Greek in Camarinos' employ. The dead Melanesian was Tutui, one of Sharp's divers. They went back to the launch where Wing sat over the bound Camarinos, who was still half-comatose.

"I think they'll all go back to the bungalow," said Sharp. "They love a fire and it's burning like pitch-pine, —— them. If they had brains enough they'd get the whale-boat and try and keep us out of the leeward entrance but I don't think we'll have any trouble. And they're rotten shots, anyway."

He turned on Camarinos who was propped up against a seat, groaning and holding one hand to his sore stomach.

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"Whose crazy idea was that to start the natives drinking, Cammy?" demanded Sharp. "You stirred up a fine nest of hornets. Joe is killed and so is Lycurgus. You're lucky, because you were yellow. Now then, how many of you were in this? Come through."

He stirred the Greek with his foot as he sat handling the tiller of the launch. Camarinos sulked. Instantly Wing produced from nowhere a knife with a blade that curved like a talon and deliberately drew the keen point over the bulging stomach of the Greek. The cummerbund, split, opened apart. So did the shirt beneath it. The Greek's hairy skin showed and then came a streak of blood and a shriek from Camarinos. Wing laughed.

"You not hurt much—yet," he said. "Bimeby, you no talk, I velly solly fo' you."

And Camarinos talked. Power had been doubtful of Jim, it seemed, or afraid of the power of Sharp's personality in convincing him that the yarn about the pearls was a lie. And then they had gained unexpected information of the landing of the girl from the yacht. Power had insisted upon an instant change of plan. They would save eight hundred dollars—if they had ever really intended paying Downing in full—they would win, either the girl or the pearls, and Camarinos, in his frightened jumble of disburdenment, let out the sinister hint that Power might have been satisfied with the girl and would have tried to double-cross Sharp on any bargain of transfer of Mary for the pearls. It was Camarinos who had suggested the gin, not knowing exactly the cruel deviltry that lurked in the make-up of Sharp's crew of natives.

Four of them had come, full-armed. They had expected to draw Sharp away from the bungalow by the drunken racket of the natives and then to kidnap the girl. Jim they figured on as neutral. He might join them or not. Anyway the four of them, in a surprize, could easily handle Jim, Wing and a slender girl. The one hitch lay in their having to land at a point remote from the bungalow. So, at the last, they left Camarinos to watch the launch.

"They made a good choice," said Sharp satirically. "Having spoken, Cammy, you can keep quiet till you come before the commissioner. Power is still hiding out somewhere," he said to Jim. "I am not going to conduct a relief on his behalf. When we get to port we'll come back with the necessary law and order force and, if Power is still hanging on, he too can tell it to the commissioner. But Mary's been in that water-cave alone long enough, we'll get her out and then off to the Big Island."

"How are you going to get word to her?" asked Jim.

The launch was running well under his ministrations and they had already rounded the western end of the island and were running for the reef entrance. The bungalow was flaming high, sending out blasts of orange and scarlet sparks into a pall of gray smoke above which hung the quiet moon.

"HOW well can you swim, Jim?"

"Like a fish," answered Jim quite truthfully and without bragging. "I don't know how my wind is but I guess I can make it all right."

"I'd go myself," said Sharp, "but I can't raise my right arm above my shoulder since I smashed it in a fall. As for Wing——"

"Let me go," pleaded Jim.

Sharp looked at him understandingly. Beneath that lustrous moon it was almost as bright as day. While the land and sea did not hold full color they were tinted and expressions were plain to read. Even Wing looked at Jim's eagerness sympathetically.

"All right," said Sharp. "I haven't been into her water-cave myself but she showed me the opening. Tide's full and the moon's high. You'll have light enough to see the entrance under water. A little over two fathoms down. She watched a turtle go into it one day and decided to explore it. There's a tunnel, some thirty feet long I should imagine, though it may be more. That leads into the cave and the cave opens up into a long air-shaft.

"You can't climb up it or down, it's too smooth and Mary has never been able to locate it from land. Ferns cover it in the first place and there are too many pots and blow-holes all about to make investigation encouraging. The entrance is near that big rock she dived from. I can point it out to you and, as I say, I think there will be light enough to make it out very fairly. Here's our opening. They didn't think of the whale-boat. We'll have to run their gantlet if they see us from the fire. Full speed, Jim!"

The engine was a good one, the craft well-

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lined and they slipped fast over the smooth water. On the beach were lying the two men they had shot when the girl escaped. The bungalow was a roar of red flame and black smoke with the natives dancing about it, silhouetted, yelling like fiends of the pit, too intent upon anything but this last phase of their intoxication.

First it had been the liquor, then lust, then killing and now the mad fire-worship. With that gone they would return to the other satisfactions of their primitive emotions. Bush-boys, beach-boys, man-eaters and head-hunters, they were barely human, relapsed into utter barbarism. Jim was not sorry for Power, viewing things generally, but he shuddered at what his fate might be, hiding until some of the trail-wise natives made him break cover for one last, awful race.

As for the girl, plucky Mary Leigh, who had been so decent to him in those Californian days and who still seemed to hold some faith in him that he was bent on doing his utmost to revive and make flourish—Mary, sitting in her dank cave with the yells, the shots sounding dimly down the air-shaft, with the sky perhaps reddened above by the fire, would soon be safe and he would have helped materially to save her.

Two nights ago he was a human weed flung up on the beach. Now, by some fortunate chance, he was at his best again.

"And, by the piper of Moses," Jim told himself as he made preparations for his swim, "I'll stick there."

He took off shoes and shirt and singlet, cut off his pongee trousers recklessly between thighs and knee with Wing's knife, and girded his belt tight, tending the engine as he worked until, at a word from Sharp, he shut off the power and the launch glided between the rocks close in to the cliff. Wing had found a boat-hook and stood up with it, fending off, while Sharp looked for his marks.

Jim, peering over the side, saw the streak of blue flame that lined their progress and flickered in their slow wake. Deeper little bursts of the same phosphorescence glowed like flames of burning alcohol where fishes scudded away from their shadow.

They slid close to a rock. Sharp grabbed at the seaweed and, with Wing helping, stopped all way.

"There's your opening, Jim," he said. "See it?"

There was barely a ripple on the water and the high moon sent down kindly rays that helped. Jim vaguely saw a blur in the face of the cliff, far down it seemed, and the water was deep.

"I've got it," he said.

He curved and slipped into the water like an eel, swimming down, down, and then, balancing in the buoyant element, struck into the tunnel.

"Thirty feet," Sharp had said. "Perhaps more."

It was very surely more. He was in pitch darkness now. Twice his arm struck a slimy sidewall. Once a clinging thing wrapped itself about his leg and his soul shrank as his skin goose-fleshed. A giant squid! The horror of the beaked brute, the hideous, useless struggle, the choking death, beat on his soul. Then it passed and he knew it for a trailing seaweed.

And his wind was failing him. He had a "stitch" in his side, his lungs labored. His dissipation had undone him? Carbonized blood choked his brain cells, his senses dulled and the blackness seemed to penetrate him like an essence, the water to be like lead. Yet, as long as his enduring heart ticked the one thought flickered, the determination held. To fight. To keep going. To. . . .

His strokes were feeble and he could no longer control himself. He side-slipped in the water and began to turn like a log in a current. It could not be endured. . . He must have entered the wrong cave. It was the end.

Then, as he slowly rolled, far above him showed a faint dapple of blurred spots. Light! Air! It was the saving, vertical rays of the moon striking through the leafy cover of the shaft, touching the water surface of the inner pool. So his tortured body, hot with the pounding of devitalized blood, came into a sweet coldness of fresh air that rushed into his lungs as he expelled the last remnant of his breath. He had won!

"Tread water! Stay where you are! I have you covered."

It was the voice of the girl, cool, steady. Jim could not see her or the weapon he knew was leveled at him.

"'S all right, Mary. 'S Jim," he managed and lost words in a gurgle as his tired limbs relaxed in the revulsion and he dipped below his lips.

"Oh, Jim! This way. To your right."

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Relief in her tone, too, and a personal welcome, Jim thought, as he paddled to where a slim hand and smooth arm were extended to him. He hauled out on a ledge and lay panting, trying to talk.

"Got to get—right back," he said. "Launch—outside. We swiped it. I asked—to come in—for you. Everything—all right. Natives went amuck—but we're O. K.—now. Better be—starting."

"You've got to take your wind, as the divers do," she said. "Take long breaths. Don't talk."

Her hand lay on his arm and she left it there. It seemed to Jim as if fresh resolution for making good pulsed into him from the girl's brave purity.

"All right now," he said. "Mary Leigh, you're a brick!"

"I'll lead," she said. "The tunnel is right across from us."

He saw her dimly as she stood up, slenderly rounded, crouched and was gone, luminous bubbles breaking after her. It was better going back. He had his second wind, for one thing, and the strain was over.

They came up outside almost together.

A few strokes away the water was in convulsion, foam shot with pale fire, nebulous about a thrashing, confused mass like a great fish in a death-flurry. It subsided, the black head of Wing, silk-bound, flashed like a seal and they saw the glitter of his eyes, the gleam of his teeth.

"All light, missy, all light," he said. "We swim to launch, plenty quick, I think."

With swift downward kicks they heaved themselves up at arms' lengths on the gunwale and scrambled aboard the drifting craft. Mary gave a little cry and sprang to where Sharp leaned against the thwart, a splotch of blood on his white shirt by the shoulder. His eyes were open and he smiled.

"All right, Mary. Nothing serious. Let's get out of here, Jim."

Jim went to the engine and started it. There was a splash in the water to the right. Glancing, he saw the fins of a shark, then another. They were fighting over something below the surface, tearing it apart.

WING had the tiller and the launch headed for the opening. The fire was dying down and the natives caught sight of them, rushing furious, impotent to the beach. One or two plunged in but the swift launch shot on, through the reef gate and on to the open sea and the Big Island where the commissioner administered the laws that would soon reckon with the outbreak.

Mary was tearing Jim's shirt into strips and bandaging her stepfather's shoulder. Jim, his engine running like a clock, stepped over the sullen, silent bulk of their prisoner and put his coat over the girl's shoulders. Then he sat down by Wing.

"That one other man, he sneak down by cliff," said Wing. "Boss, he standing up and that man shoot. Me, I am put cloth in Cammy mouth, suppose he want to cly out, bling Kanakas. Boss he fall, an' man, he no see me, he come out, walk, swim a lilly, get on lock an' tly to come in boat. Me? I too much leady fo' him. We fall in sea. He get me by thloat but I have knife."

He brought out the curving blade. The water had washed off all stains but Wing made an upward, slitting gesture that told the climax of the battle. With an effort Mary repressed a shudder.

"I make him empty, all same I clean fish," he said. "I think shark smell blood, they finish. I owe you one life now, Boss? This time I pay fo' my blother. Next time maybe fo' me. Then we even."

Sharp was sitting up now.

"We'll settle the score presently, Wing," he said. "There is quite a little stack coming to you, too, Jim. I'm not going to talk much now. I'll let Mary do it for me. Only, I'm going to be laid up for a while. I'll need help in fixing things over. Want to stay on Puakiki and get everything in shape, Jim?"

The girl had turned toward him. Her eyes were bright. Her voice shook a little, as if her lips trembled.

"Will you, Jim?" she asked.

It was about thirty minutes later that Jim gasped:

"The pearls. What about the pearls?"

Sharp smiled.

"I didn't have a pearl on the island worth looking twice at, Jim. I sold the lot to Regnier, of Tahiti, two months ago. The few odds and ends I had on hand I gave to Dillingham, the owner of the yacht that brought Mary to Puakiki.

"And the money for them, my boy, is very safely banked."

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THE Treasure of the Incas, a tempting subject. Also, here's a bit of an argument for Uncle Frank Huston on the matter of "roping" Indian squaws. And a rousing cheer for South America.

Charlottesville, Va.

As there has been some discussion about the Treasure of the Incas in our magazine, the following may be of interest to your readers. It is taken from a recent book, "The Incas of Peru," by Sir C. Markham Gordon, 1911. (The author spent many years in Peru and in studying its history, etc. He is an acknowledged expert on Peruvian matters, and has written a number of books in the last sixty years on the subject.)

THE Spaniards required a ransom in gold to be paid for Atahualpa. "The roads were promptly traversed by the bearers of gold in all shapes and forms. On the execution of Atahualpa, the gold ceased to arrive. All that was on its way was concealed, but already an amount equivalent to seventeen million five hundred thousand dollars of our money had reached the Spaniards, chiefly in the forms of square or oblong plates which had been used to adorn the walls of houses. A far greater amount was concealed and has never yet been found, though the secret has been handed down and on one occasion a small portion was used in the interests of the people. When the old chief Pumacagna was about to head an insurrection against the Spaniards, he had no funds for procuring arms and ammunition. After obtaining from him an oath of secrecy, the then guardian took him blindfolded to the place where the vast treasure was concealed, and he was allowed to take enough to meet his needs. He was defeated and put to death. No one else has ever been admitted to the secret. My friend Col. Astete remembered Pumacagna who rose against the Spaniards in 1815.

"PUMACAGNA was shown the wealth of the Incas by an Indian who had inherited the secret. Led up the bed of the river Huatany for a long distance, blindfolded and in the night, he suddenly found himself surrounded by vases, cups, plates, ingots and great statues, all of pure gold, in incredible profusion. He only took what he urgently needed to equip his troops. Returning to Cuzco, he went straight to Col. Astete's house. The Señora Astete told me that she could remember his coming into the room, and wet through, to relate his adventures.

"In another part of Peru (the coast region) much treasure had been discovered from the ruins of Chimu. "Altogether gold worth twenty-seven million five hundred thousand dollars is recorded. The amounts are derived from the records of the fifth part that had to be paid to the Spanish King. Excavations were continued at intervals. In 1797 the treasure called the Pefe Chico was secured. The Peje Grande has yet to be found. As late as Squier's time a certain Col. La Rosa was excavating and had already obtained thirty thousand dollars. Altogether millions have been obtained in gold bars and ornaments."

MY CREDENTIALS in regard to knowledge of the Indians are these—I went West to the real frontier forty-six years ago. I have lived in the country of the following tribes and have been in daily contact with them for often a long time: Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arrapahoe, Southern Arrapahoe, Sioux, Red Cloud's bands, Shoshone, Ute, Apache, Pueblo, Kiowa and Comanche.

A statement was made about the Indian women being "roped" (to protect their chastity). I never knew or heard of such a case in all the years I was amongst them. The different tribes vary much as to customs, etc. The inference was that it was a usual Indian habit. This is not so amongst the tribes I knew. Again, instead of their women having a shuffling gait due to the aforesaid "roping," their walk was free and often graceful. The handsomest Indian women I have ever seen were Cheyennes.

SINCE you started "Ask Adventure" it's the first part I read and enjoy most. But oh! how pitiful and pathetic are the inquiries of some of the writers who ask about West Africa. The worst place in the world for a white man, when they have in South America the finest place left on the globe, for adventures of all sorts. Rich in minerals and precious stones. The grandest forests and rivers. It's the best place I know of for the man who wants adventure. Where on this earth is a more beautiful spot than the Bay of Rio? Plenty of elbow-room in the greatest part of South America for one who loves Nature and wants to get away from the crowd.—"VIELHO."

IN THE Mid-February issue Jack Bechdolt gave us his first story, "Last Man Out," in our magazine but, not through his own fault, it is with his second, in this issue, that he follows our Camp-Fire custom and introduces himself:

New York.

During twelve years of newspaper work on the Pacific Coast I saw most of the things I have written about and a vast number of things I hope

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to write about some time. This education included such interesting special courses as mountain-climbing through blizzards and avalanches; going underground into caisson work and overhead on spectacular skeletons of bridges; all the usual routine of fire and flood and murder and violence that makes up newspaper reporting, but no first-hand adventure of any sort—unless it was being sued for libel.

OUTSIDE of being hungry for several days at a time and extremely uncomfortable on various occasions, I have had to collect my adventures second-hand. For instance, the tunnel experience in "Last Man Out" was related to me by a sand hog I met one day underground. He told me the story in a very leaky tunnel such as I described in this yarn and, while no doubt his idea was to entertain me, he made me extremely uncomfortable by suggesting something that might easily have happened to us—but it didn't.

All these excursions into forest fires and shipwrecks and snowfields were premeditated. They were part of my job. Sometimes they turned out uncomfortably, but they always ended happily in a nice warm office, a typewriter and a few more columns of copy for the Sunday paper.

I got a bigger thrill when I first saw New York than I did out of any of them. There is more thrill in hitting on a really good idea for a story—which happens rarely—than in a book full of earthquakes, so far as I'm concerned.

You see, I'm a tame sort of guy. I'd rather perpetrate a split infinitive than commit murder, but I'm an awfully good listener and I confess I like to listen to this gang around the "Camp-Fire." They're regular fellows.—JACK BECHDOLT.

THIS Australian comrade joined us from a hospital bed and he talks to us from a remote and lonely corner of the world. Our welcome and greetings.

Earl J. Teets, you will remember, in response to Edgar Young's query "What is the spirit of adventure, biologically speaking?" said that, though he'd knocked around a good deal and done things others considered adventure, he had never met it and wanted to know what it was anyhow.

The disease mentioned in the letter was the rare one that causes an Indian to turn white bit by bit. It figured in one of our stories by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton and we've had other Camp-Fire testimony establishing it as a fact, though this is the first time any of us have vouched for it outside North America.

Mornington Island,
Via Burketown,
North Queensland, Australia.

My introduction to it was in this wise. Was having a bit of a spell in a military hospital, and at the time not feeling too fit for anything, not even reading, as the doctors had just finished having a little game with me. It was a Sunday morning and some ladies of the Red Cross had brought round some books. I did not feel like anything heavy and was going to decline any when one said, "I think you would like to read one of these." And *Adventure* was handed me. I read it and asked for more on the next Sunday and have been reading them ever since.

Our mails at this end of the country are very infrequent and irregular—we have to go for them about one hundred and thirty miles—and by last mail received four of your magazines.

I FEEL almost inclined to agree with your correspondent, Earl J. Teets, and ask "What is adventure?" Some would probably think my present position would be or hold adventure, but all I can say is life is very lonely and monotonous. Am acting superintendent of an Aboriginal Station. The natives murdered the former superintendent and attacked the station, the inmates barely escaping with their lives. The police came and arrested all concerned. I was rushed up and for past nine months have been alone, with exception of one other white, and he goes out this boat. Was here before the war and knew people and their ways and have got along very well with them.

Am always very interested in the stories of the Red Indians, but they are far ahead of these Australian aboriginals in nearly every respect. The disease described by Mr. Pinkerton is also known here. I thought it was leprosy at first and had a man examined for such.—N. A. PAULL.

WITH his first story in our magazine, William H. Pope, by Camp-Fire custom, stands up among us and gets us all acquainted with him:

Bradford, Arkansas.

I deem it a real honor to be allowed a seat by the Camp-Fire where I can stretch myself out and warm my adventure-loving spirit. At the same time I am honestly grieved that I have no fagot to contribute to its flames. However, here goes my best.

HAS a camp-follower ever been known to give advice to the commanding officer? If so, I can't recall the instance, and I don't think I should break the precedent by relating a series of trivial occurrences to a group of old-timers to whom the winding trails of the vast solitudes are open books.

I have never had a real adventure. Somehow, the spiced wine of romance, adventure and peril has flowed past and I have been unable to wet my lips. But I have that vague unrest of the mind, that insistent desire to crawl from beneath that irksome crust known as civilization and plunge into the heart of a land that is still as God made it—in short, the wanderlust, and some day I hope to give it free rein.

I HAVE bottled whisky enough to make an excellent swimming-pool—before Prohibition could walk without help, of course, and I have mixed concrete in the hottest months in the year in the hills of Kansas City. I have also railroaded a little (as a section-hand, thank you) and once had the temerity to laugh when one of my fellow-workers "shot" a spike he was driving which hit the section boss right where he lived, and the section boss was built like a wash-kettle, too!

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I have flatheaded in the pine hills of Arkansas and listened to big pine logs crash through the underbrush, as they would do occasionally if you gave them a little push on the stony hillsides; and I have drifted from there to the bottom-lands and cut five- and six-foot oaks that jarred the ground when they fell.

AND the Brotherhood of the Brakebeam is not a mystery to me, for I have sat before a leaping fire in the hoboes' "jungles" and listened to some "blowed-in-the-glass" tell a colorful tale of an encounter with a bull or a shack. And I was once chased off a speeding train by a half-stewed brakie with a murderous gleam in his eye, and a still more murderous looking knife in his hand.

Then, too, I have hunted and fished for days at a time and had that pleasant experience of taking an indignant skunk out of a trap and the equally pleasant experience of dropping a rifle in eight feet of icy river-water one frosty morning in October and having to dive until I retrieved it.

Possibly the most hair-raising ordeal through which I have yet passed was getting married. But I am glad to add that my fright was short-lived.

I FIRST saw the light in the limestone hills of Tennessee and now make my home in the sandstone hills of Arkansas, and, while I have spent many years in the city, I have found the woods and fields better suited to my temperament. Rejected for the war because of physical deficiency, I tried to do my little bit by pulling a plowline over old Beck.

But some time in the dim future I am going to try my hand at a real adventure and, as I am only twenty-two, I think I'll get my chance.—WM. H. POPE.

A LETTER from a Chicago comrade that ought to make any real American with a white skin drop his eyes in shame:

Chicago.

I wish to thank Clyde B. Hough for his story, "Two Calls in the Jungle," which appears in the Mid-November copy of *Adventure*.

It is no secret that an overwhelming majority of the American whites seem over anxious to see only the evil side of the Negro race—which is no worse than the evils of another race—due I am sure to their ignorance of that race rather than from malice.

During the many parades witnessed in this city on several occasions I have heard the remark, "Look at the Crap Shooters" or "Look out for your chickens," and other disparaging remarks when our colored boys went by. On one occasion, when a troop train was going through Milwaukee this Summer, every one cheering and waving, a woman suddenly shouted, "Huh! it's nothing but niggers," at which the cheering stopped almost instantly as far as her voice carried.

It is with heart-felt gratitude that I have read the works of the one *White Man* who has shown the true character of the average American Negro, and again, I, a member of that race, thank him.—D. MAXEY.

Whatever other cities may have done I'm glad to say that New York, when our boys in khaki marched its streets before sailing for France, gave our colored troops a rousing welcome and salute. Indeed, all I happened to hear speak of it said the black Americans got louder cheers than any others that marched down Fifth Avenue. If Chicago jeered instead of cheered—well, as between a stay-at-home white man on the sidewalk or in a window and a going-to-the-war black man marching in the street, it seems to me that, before the white man does any jeering, he'd better figure to himself a whole lot as to whether the black man may not be a better man and a better American than he himself. Maybe he isn't, but the burden of proof lies on the man who is *not* offering his life for his country.

YES, we have our "race problem," and only fools take an extreme stand on either side, but April, 1917, gave us a still bigger problem to face. In that crisis we asked the black men to help fight for America and they responded as loyally as did the white men. More so than did large parts of our white citizenry.

I am glad a story in *Adventure* earns their thanks. And I am glad I have a chance, openly and publicly, to pay my personal respects, as an American, to their loyalty to a country that has treated them none too fairly and to their war service for a democracy that has given them only the scraps from its plate. The man who jeers those black soldiers ought to be knocked down in his tracks.

And if any narrow-minded fanatic will write me a brief word of condemnation for my attitude I'll take rich pleasure in telling him, fully and in very frank detail, my honest and glowing opinion of him—so far as the use of the mails permits.

IT MIGHT be a good plan for any American to find out what troops, at the outbreak of the war, when there were few places where disloyalty might not be found, were entrusted by the Government with the posts where utter loyalty was most essential.

Also, here is a point of view worth considering, from Mr. Hough:

Oakland, Calif.

When one compares the time since the negro, a ring in his nose, was yanked out of his native jungle, with the time that the white race has been in the process of civilization, one must admit that

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the negro has been traveling the road of progress in seven-league boots.—C. B. HOUGH.

I wrote to Mr. Maxey, expressing more briefly what I have said above, and asking permission to print his letter. I mentioned Captain, now Colonel, Rodney as having commanded colored Regulars and having a high opinion of them. Here is D. Maxey's reply, and I ask whether any one of you, white or black, high or low, could have brought to this matter a finer attitude of mind, a higher type of manliness, a more splendid patriotism or a keener realization of the individual citizen's duty to the people.

Chicago.

Knowing how much correspondence, sane and otherwise, to which you must attend, I call it rather good of you to reply to my letter concerning Mr. Hough's story.

The entire U. S. knows the attitude of Illinois to the negro in general, and your generous comment on the colored soldiers is doubly appreciated at a time when I have just left the open grave of a negro private, my brother—and helps take away the bitter resentment that it is only natural for me to feel.

Capt. Rodney was one of my favorite authors. If anything I have written can be made of use in any way, take it, and welcome, so long as it does not stir up the old race question, for I fully realize this is no time to start a personal feud when a world's safety is at stake.

Thanking you for your personal interest in the soldiers of my race, I remain—D. MAXEY.

LIKE the other three new members of our writers' brigade, William M. McCoy follows Camp-Fire custom and introduces himself:

Los Angeles, Cal.

I have to admit that there isn't much of interest about myself to tell. But I like the Camp-Fire, and not only want to do my share, but assuredly appreciate the opportunity to become more closely acquainted with *Adventure's* crew, so here goes:

AFTER looking over the field, I joined my parents at Booneville, Missouri, in 1882. The place had a good, adventurous name, but old Daniel had been dead for so long that things had quieted down. After hanging around for about a year, waiting for something to happen, I took my parents by the hand and led them to California—and have never been sorry. My people on both sides came to this country long before the Revolution, and they have always liked room, so sort of kept in front of the westward parade. Uncles and other relatives on both sides had preceded us to California, several having crossed the plains in '49.

Grew up on a ranch with dogs, horses, Chink cooks and most everything, including all the room in sight, with plenty more around the edges. Also numerous old plainsmen who had been a part of the days of '49 and all the days following, fine old chaps who are now only bright boyhood memories Learned to ride, shoot, and the kindred arts before I entered grammar school—such things were sort of requirements for admission to the school I attended.

SINCE then I have gone fishing, skinned mules, gone to college, ridden the range, reported for newspapers—night police in a wide-open town, and also politics—and perpetrated editorials for other newspapers, prospected, written stories, worked, received money for my stories, gone sailing, turned out a number of movies, and even when the daily snack of flour and beans has upon occasion decided to depart from my vicinity, I have always been able to get my rope on its hind leg before dark.

Adventures? Mine always have sort of sneaked up on me. If I had known they were coming I might have had a date elsewhere. Have seen a little violence and sudden death, wore a gun for some years, and out of the whole time it only saved my life once. And even that was the result of a mistake. A crew of peeved individuals had decided to dispense with the presence upon this earth of a certain person for whom they did not seem to care, and in the dark they inadvertently mistook me for this *hombre*.

AT ANOTHER time a forty-five caliber bullet got inside the crown of my hat. It didn't seem to stay long—sort of went on out the top in a hurry. But that wasn't the bothersome part; what bothered me was that the blasted hunk of lead had sort of snuggled up to my right temple and squeezed between my head and the sweatband of my hat to get into what what you might call my attic. After it was all over the boys claimed, of course, that when I saw that gun wink at me my hair stood up on end, lifting my hat so high that a brick could have been heaved clear through without touching anything but my brown tresses. It would be easier for me to see the joke in this, if it were not for the fact that from that day on I have had to wear very strong and expensive glasses. Any man who is dependent upon a bit of glass in order to see knows there is no joke in it.

I HAVE been thrown off of horses in all sorts of places, and in the most undignified manner, and have gotten myself into trouble in several languages. Have been over, around and through thousands of miles of desert, the Rockies and the Sierras. Once I wanted to prove that I was born to be hung—that's what the crew said—and got swept overboard at sea. Another time, when I had wandered away off the range, I got extra reckless and got married in Boston. But that isn't why I crossed the Klondike Hills in the desert while the Coyotes, a crew of outlaws, wanted for eleven murders, were holed up there. I had approached the Klondikes from the Devil's Playground country, hadn't seen a soul, and didn't know the Coyotes were about until after I had safely finished the job.

If I have any hobbies they are sailing on salt water, fishing in fresh water, dogs, mountains and folks. I like all the "ings" except working. Have tried repeatedly to persuade my Uncle Sam to let me fight, but he won't let me have my whack at ole Tin Bill. I am now expecting to be sent over-seas

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in the transportation and post exchange department of the "Y." I'm going to have a share in the great adventure some way.—WILLIAM M. McCOY.

ANOTHER definition of the spirit of adventure, from some one whom most of us consider an authority:

St. Louis, Mo.

I have watched for all the replies to Edgar Young's interesting query, "What is the spirit of adventure, particularly in its biological aspects?" But here is one that takes the cake. It is not my own but that of a great adventurer:

"THE history of civilization is the history of wandering, sword in hand, in search of food. In the misty younger world we catch glimpses of phantom races, rising, slaying, finding food, building rude civilizations, decaying, falling under the swords of stronger hands, and passing utterly away. Man, like any other animal, has roved over the earth seeking what he might devour; *not romance and adventure, but the hunger-need*, has *urged him on his vast adventures*. Whether a bankrupt gentleman failing to colonize Virginia or a lean Cantonese contracting to labor on the sugar plantations of Hawaii, in each case, gentleman and coolie, it is a desperate attempt to get something to eat, to get more to eat than he can get at home.

"It has always been so from the time of the first pre-human anthropoid crossing a mountain divide in quest of better berry bushes beyond, down to the latest Slovak, arriving on our shores today, to go to work in the coal mines of Pennsylvania."

Here is the spirit of adventure in its true light, with all the romance and glamour taken off, written by that greatest of all adventurers, Jack London.—FRED. K. SCHWALM.

AS HE'D said something in a letter about suhuara ribs and I didn't know enough to understand, I asked Alex. McLaren for more information. He kindly gives it in the following letter which will interest others than myself. Also something about our old pet the Gila monster.

Ruby, Arizona.

I will attempt to elucidate—on suhuara ribs. The suhuara (pronounced *soo-war-a*, *a* as in and) is the giant or sometimes called "Club Cactus," and in its infancy is sometimes referred to as "Niggerhead." They grow to a height sometimes exceeding twenty feet, and set one to wondering, after chopping one down, how it is it offers so much resistance to the strong desert winds and so little to the ax. And they are not deep-rooted, either; I have often seen them clinging to a mere crevice in a vertical wall of rock.

A CROSS-SECTION of one shows it to be made up as follows. We will assume the cross-section to be eighteen inches in diameter. The outside, a corrugated circle or circle of corrugations, dark green in color, the apex of each of the corrugations (which run parallel to the line of growth) is covered with a row of spines (not intended to sit on) from the bottom to the very top. The outside is covered with about two inches of spines, corrugations and pithy matter, which, when dried has a fibrous appearance, but when growing is mostly water. Beneath that two inches and forming a complete circle is a row of ribs. These ribs (I daresay they can be classed as wood) are about one and one-half inches in diameter at butt, tapering like a fish-pole to nothing at top, and are interlocked with each other at intervals of a couple of feet for near their entire length, on about the same plan as our ribs interlock in the breast. Inside of this "palisade" of ribs is a mass of pithy pulp. The ribs when dry somewhat resemble rattan in porosity but are not near as flexible.

THE suhuara bear what I think is a very delicious fruit, much sought after by the Indians. The squaws gather it and often I have seen them with a couple of "ribs" spliced together pulling it down, from the top of the cactus where it grows, on to skins spread below on the ground. It resembles and tastes very much like a fig.

When the cactus dies, and after a year or so in the desert sun, the only substantial part left is the ribs. The Mexicans and Indians use them in building their mud *jacals* (*ha-kals*, shacks), in the construction of which they play much the same part as nature allotted them in the suhuara, viz.:—reinforcing bars.

Are also used in light fencing and have even seen them used in mining as "lagging." And the old desert prospector invariably uses one as a cane and burro persuader.

THE word *suhuara* is of Indian origin and, I think, Apache or Papago. And at the time I encountered the Gila monster (pronounced *hec-la*) I was using one as a cane or alpenstock. I am sorry I can not now get hold of one Gila monster to skin and send you, but I will yet, and the color you can see for yourself.

They are not so overly plentiful, but a person who knocks about the desert and mountains as much as I do runs on to them occasionally. I had often heard what deadly enemies the rattler and the Gila were, so for my own information I once caught one of each and placed them together in a box covered with wire netting, for observation.

Mr. Rattler, a large "diamond back," got off in one corner and Mr. Gila in the other and no effort of ours could induce them to notice each other. Next morning, however, on looking in the box we found both were dead. How they worked it I can not say, but neither one was chewed up, and they were lying in opposite corners of the box.

I HAVE taken the liberty of enclosing a few photographs, inasmuch as some of them bear on people and places I have seen mentioned in Camp-Fire. These places may have their dangers, privations and inconveniences but believe me, partner, I would not give them, with the solitude, quiet, and in turn, adventure they offer, for the Biltmore, Fifth Avenue with its gay throng, Broadway with its clanging of bells and blaze of lights, Riverside Drive, Central Park and the Bronx, with their artificial sylvan effects, pretty nursemaids and perambulators, etc.

But then, every coyote picks his own range or *"Cada maestro tenga sus libros."* Of course I have punched cattle, hunted and mined all of my life, and one can't find room for the East although a

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couple years since I did try to negotiate a mining deal on a property within three hours' ride of where you are probably sitting reading this. That was at Roxbury, Conn., up on the Litchfield branch, on an old property with a rich historic as well as mineral value, but then that has naught in common with Gila monsters or a suhuara.

I AM now camped opening up a gold-silver property just a mile from the Mexican line near Casa Piedra, where the little skirmish took place, just below the Montana Mine, and very near (as distances in this country are reckoned) to Arivaca where Edwin C. Dickinson was stationed when he got the "dope" for "To Quit My Post," which appeared in *Adventure*. I am very familiar with Arivaca and want to go on record in saying the points mentioned in the story fit that little place in every respect, and I don't think, if there is any contention, that it would be very difficult for me to find "*Nita*," as I have been told by Mexicans of a girl whose life's story would not need editing to cast her for the part.—ALEX. MCLAREN.

P. S.—The suhuara bears the credit for having saved the life of more than one desert prospector from death by thirst. The scheme, I believe, is to tap it about five feet from bottom. Hang the canteen, then light a fire at butt. Heat, I believe, causes expansion or ebullition of sap and it oozes into canteen. I have tasted it and I guess "any port in a storm" is the prescription it is used to fill. Take my word, it is sickening in taste. Not Burgundy by any means.—MAC.

THREE more of our comrades have left us. Ira South, poet, died in the Marine Hospital at Portsmouth, Virginia, of broncho-pneumonia. Thomas Clarity, an artist who has done some of our covers, also died in a military training camp. Charles Campbell Jones, poet, died in Kansas City of blood-poisoning. Our salute to them, standing, and may the Long Trail be soft under their feet.

Two died for our country as truly as if they had stopped a German bullet in France. The third, run over by an engine eleven years ago, paralyzed from the waist down, could not die for his country, but he lived for his fellow-men. "I'll never write the kind of stuff that adds to human misery, or if I do I'll tear it up." And Charles C. Jones lived up to that. From his invalid's bed came only words that were brave, cheery, strong, sweet with a man's sweetness.

"I AM somewhat of an adventurer myself." Many a letter to us begins with that sentence and often "somewhat" is a very mild word for the case. In the following letter, "somewhat" is the right word, yet, even so, the writer of it is a kind of "fireside adventurer" in butterflies. If his own expeditions are gentle ones, at least, by his exchanges with them, he shares a bit in the adventures of those other collectors whose butterflies are brought in from lands where butterfly-catching is often enough a matter of life and death.

Brookline, Mass.

I am somewhat of an adventurer myself. Not among wild and dangerous beasts or in far-off lands, but right here in the New England States, among butterflies. In short, I am interested during my spare hours in making a collection of butterflies, and so far have been able to gather together several thousand of species.—JASPER STEWART, 103 Abbotsford Road.

No, chasing butterflies in New England doesn't come under the head of "perils by land and sea." But neither do the pursuits of many of us, and, if I may join in our Camp-Fire discussion about adventure and the spirit of adventure, I'm one of those who believe that the quiet places of the world have their risks and excitements. Perhaps adventure is only a break in monotony and altogether a matter relative to a particular case. One thing seems sure—it's quite an adventure to attempt to define adventure.

WHILE already known to us at Camp-Fire, especially as one of those who compiled for us "Firearms, Old and New," D. Wiggins, on the occasion of his first story in our magazine, follows custom and stands up to tell us about himself. He wrote his "talk" to us while he was still in the Army and before the armistice was signed.

Camp Lewis, Amer. Lake, Wash.

This letter is perforce a hurried one, as I am writing at the Top Sergeant's desk, and he may return ere I can fade.

Yes, I'm in. Company Mechanic for Arms of the "Suicide Club"; the Machine Gun Co. of the 75th Infantry is my home.

Born on Boot Hill, Dodge City, Kansas, thus inheriting thirst for blood and iron. Schooling slight; reading various, and no favorites played. Kansas, Nebraska, California, Oklahoma Territory and Oregon in turn have been honored ? by my residence. Now facing the Greater Adventure "Over There." Will send Iron Cross with .45 through center to you after march down Unter der Linden. That's all of importance.—D. WIGGINS.

THE writer of the following wrote his particular admiration for the story in question, but being a loyal "gun fan," duty impels him to take issue on one point:

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Baltimore, Md.

Apropos *Lerch's* Luger pulling to the left; this was not caused by the mechanism being "jolted a little out of alignment," as Mr. A. J. Hayes suggests in his splendid story ("Sirgarkh Rubies"), as the jolting of the mechanism would not cause the gun to throw out of true. The function of the mechanism is to start the ball by firing the cartridge, but the barrel takes care of its flight. The gun pulling to the left was caused by one of the two following ways:

ONE was that, when *San Kee* threw *Lerch* off the Sacred Parapet, he fell with the Luger under his right side, his weight falling on it so suddenly as to bend the barrel only slightly, not so as to be noticeable when looking at the weapon, but sufficiently to cause it to throw to the left when shooting at fifty yards or more.

The other and more likely cause was that *Lerch*, being in a sandy country, in some way or other got a little sand in the toe of his holster (probably scooped it up when he was thrown), which settled toward the right side, causing a slight wear on the lands, on that side of the barrel. Now when a ball is fired, it leaves the firing-chamber and is gripped by the lands, which give to it its rotary motion, spinning it straight, and to do this the lands at the end of the barrel must be micrometically even, so that when the bullet leaves the muzzle all the lands let go at exactly the same time and, if this is done, the ball is steered true on its course, while if the lands are not even, the course will not hold true, for no rifle or pistol is any truer or more accurate than the lands at the end of the barrel warrant it to be, these at this point giving the ball its parting direction. Assuming, then, that *Lerch's* gun had the lands worn on the right side of the barrel, these would let go the ball an infinitesimal part of a second before the lands on the left side let go, which would cause the ball to be blown to the left, or, as we would off-handedly say, "the gun pulled a little to the left."

IT IS a great pity Mr. Hayes allowed *Lerch* to die, which caused the loss of the rubies. His kind is too scarce. I wish he might write a sequel; having *Foy San* recover the remains of *Lerch* and *Muriel McAllen* and, with the aid of his herbs and ointments, revive them for purposes of revenge, and then *Lerch*, with his crafty mind, outwit him, escape with the girl and the rubies, and a fitting end would have him plant a shot from the good Luger between the eyes of *Foy San*.—WM. E. MEPHAM.

As we know now, there can be no sequel to the story, since Arthur James Hayes has given his life for his country.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

We live in a time of many and mighty changes. Underneath all the changes runs one powerful, fundamental current—mankind's growing impulse toward a fuller and more real democracy and toward a brotherhood of man that will some day spread throughout the world.

There are many paths to this goal. We see the paths, but we waste time in debating which to follow, we divide and scatter ourselves over them all. For we do *not* clearly see the goal.

We want more democracy, but most of us do not clearly know what democracy is. Our idea of democracy is only general and careless. Almost none of us can reduce it to its bare fundamentals so definitely that we can apply those fundamentals as test and measure of every problem and issue, great or small, that can arise in a nation's life or in an individual's relation to that life. We do not clearly know what democracy is.

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It is this ignorance of our goal that most impedes our progress toward it. The logical remedy is to get a clearer understanding, a more definite knowledge, of democracy's real nature and workings. This department is devoted to that purpose.

Democracy is not merely a machine for governing. It is a people's attitude of mind—principles and the daily, widespread, individual practising of those principles. It can not be created by a vote or a revolution; it must be a growth. The only way to stimulate a social growth is education. The particular work of this department is to help spread that education.

Strange as it may seem, such definite, fundamental education in democracy and its practical application is almost unknown. The need is so obvious and so elementary that it has been overlooked. Americans have been so careless, so selfishly busy or so absorbed in concrete issues that they have failed to examine carefully into the democracy that they boast and have even forgotten there is need of full, solid, thorough understanding.

If you believe in democracy it is your duty to make sure that you yourself have that thorough understanding and to spread it among others. This department offers you the opportunity to do both.

TO BE of service in looking ahead for democracy we must have very clearly before our eyes the real nature of what we are trying to serve:

(1) Democracy is not just a form of government or a piece of governing machinery. It is a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people. Therefore it can be attained only by a gradual growth and education.

(2) Any violation of democracy retards its progress, weakens it, helps destroy it. *Any* autocracy within it, any rule of the many by the few, violates it, no matter who the few may be—kings, peasants, capital, labor, party, or any other individuals or minority of the people other than their chosen representatives. Any autocratic institution, any autocratic practise, any autocratic popular attitude of mind violates it. Any change by force, instead of by the lawful means democracy provides, violates it.

(3) At the present stage in democracy's development its fundamental problem is to construct a governing machinery that combines the executive efficiency of autocracy with the liberty of democracy by delegating executive control into the hands of as few officials as possible and at the same time correspondingly strengthening the *fundamental* control by the people over these officials, making the officials directly responsible and responsive to the people's will at all times, not merely at election intervals of from one to six years.

AGAINST this principle of direct control by the people many arguments will be raised, since it involves the application, in one form or another, of the initiative, referendum, recall, civil service reform, direct responsibility of cabinet officers, government ownership, etc., etc. There are three answers:

(1) Just as many objections could be raised to democracy itself—and *were* raised every time in history that this new kind of government came up for debate. The question is not "Are there objections?" or "Are there great difficulties of application?" but "Is the principle so sound and right that it will sooner or later assert itself in spite of all objections and difficulties?"

(2) You can not decide a nation's general course by deciding its minor problems considered by themselves alone. They have real meaning only when considered in relation to some general guiding principle. The only way to plan a sound comprehensive and permanent future course for a nation is to choose your fundamental principle *and then apply it*. There never was and can never be a fundamental principle that doesn't have to encounter many objections and difficulties in application. And there never has been one, and never will be one, that does not, if it is sound and right, somehow and some time make its way through all objections and difficulties that can arise against it. If democracy is sound and right, it will make its way. If any one of its principles is right, it will make its way.

So when objection arises in the path of a sound principle it does not mean that the principle must stop but that we, knowing the principle must go on, must consider ways and means, changes and adaptations, so that the delay may not be too long.

(3) It is a case of necessity. The German war has brought democracy to a fork in the road. At least temporarily, democracies had to become autocracies in order to beat the autocratically efficient Hun. Lands freed from autocracy have gone rioting toward chaos. Bring up all the objections you will, yet you can not escape the main point that, unless you prefer the chaos route, democracy's one chance for stability and progress is a more centralized and efficient form of governing machinery and that the only way to prevent autocracy as a result is to make the people's fundamental control more direct and constant. It is a case of necessity.

AT THIS stage it is not the part of this department to take up these various points of referendum, government ownership, etc. The object now is to find general principles, to make sure what democracy's general path must be. Later it will be time to take up the various important yet minor points—the obstacles along that path.

The first step is to find out what democracy really is and what its problems are; the next to find out very clearly what are our individual duties and obligations as citizens in the matter. Then begins the real work—to apply these standards to the concrete, current issues of the day, to public officials and their acts, to current legislative, executive and judicial practises, to institutions official and private, to ourselves, to all the actual use and practise of democracy. Our space is limited, but with each issue we can cover at least some ground.

And, later, we will see whether we can not set in motion some simple machinery that will spread the "attitude of mind" that is democracy.—A. S. H.

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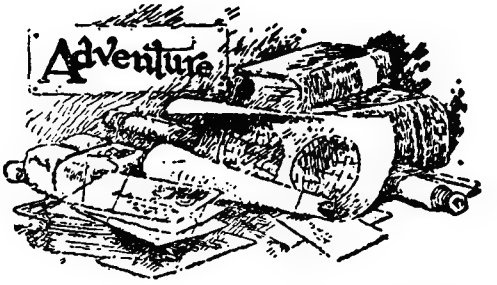

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For 25 cents we will send you, *postpaid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. 25 cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: Issues for November, 1910, March and October, 1911, May, 1912, June, 1914, June, 1915, June, 1916, and Mid-Mar., 1918. Twenty cents each.—M. R. GREY, Van Wert, Ohio.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp at the Front, or in Hospital. Americans Excluded by Order of the U. S. War Department.

Any one in the Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those Allies who fought in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest. This service is offered to Allied fighters only. The War Regulations of the U. S. Army make it impossible to acquaint letter-friends with the names of strange Americans.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

No. 1003831 PVT. BORDEN HALL, Employed Staff, Canadian Trench Warfare School, Boxhill-on-Sea, Sussex, England.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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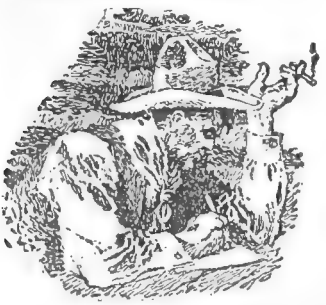
Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 4249A Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Omaha. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

10. Western U. S. Part 4 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border States of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. Mexico Part 2
WILLIAM BROCKWAY, Oriental Park, Marianao, Cuba. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 817 N. Catalina Ave., Pasadena.

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Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

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Calif. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports: hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we can find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Tanning without the Hair

HERE'S a recipe for making buckskin that involves a hideous amount of work, but the results justify the effort, apparently. As for the cost of material needed in the process—well, with fresh eggs at 80 cents a dozen and still going strong, that's another matter:

Question:—"I saw your name and address in "Ask Adventure," and would like to know if you could tell me how to tan buckskin. I have a very good way to tan hides with the hair on, and have quite a number done, but do not know how to set about taking off the hair to make buckskin. I think it rather a shame to have to throw away one or two hides each year, when you could make use of them if only you knew the way.

"If you should be unable to tell me, perhaps you could put me in the position to find out."—B. C. WALKER, Vancouver Island, B. C.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—Here is an old-time recipe used extensively by the first settlers. They didn't have much to do those days, especially in the Winter months. But I know that if you follow directions strictly the result will more than satisfy you. I have seen calfskin tanned with this method—the prettiest leather I ever saw. The recipe:

Flesh with a dull knife. Grain by scraping with a sharp instrument. Soak in pure water four or five days. Soak in lime-water till the hair pulls out easily. Remove the hair by scraping backward. Replace the skin in fresh, weak lime-water for two weeks, changing the water every four days.

Now scrape, trim, and rinse well in clean water. Put to soak again for two weeks in a mixture of wheat bran and water (a loose pint of bran to a gallon of water). Then put to soak for a half-hour in a rather weak solution of alum and salt and water, working it with a paddle or your hands the while. Replace for two days in the bran mixture, and then remove to a dry room and stretch till it *begins* to set. Now place in warm water while you prepare the following paste:

Dissolve one pound of salt and two pounds six ounces of alum in as little water as will dissolve it; add the yolks of thirty-two eggs and six pounds of

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wheat flour. If it needs more water add it. A little of this paste with a great deal of water is used for the next step.

Place your skin in a tub containing enough of the above paste and water to cover it well, and then tramp it—tramp it, tramp it, tramp it. You can't work it too much. And lastly, stretch and dry, and finish by running over it with a warm flat-iron.

Some task. But it makes *some* leather. That is the best I can do.

Prehistoric Horses of Peru

CONCERNING the ambitions of a forward-looking Navy man who anticipated the war's end; also concerning the find of "Slim" Edwards and his party:

Question:—"These questions may be partly outside your province but I hope not.

"I have been in the Navy for the best part of two years. I am now on a destroyer chasing subs over in European waters. I came over with the first dozen ships over here. I've seen some rather adventurous experiences but on the whole it is monotonous.

"I am making plans for 'after the war,' as are so many over here. I've always liked the water and have knocked about among fishermen a good bit. Now what I want to ask:

"What are the chances for a man owning a small auxiliary schooner in the Caribbean? Can he make a fair living? At what? What are the chances for fishing, trading, sponging, or miscellaneous cargo-carrying, either among the islands or along the coasts? Is it practicable to get gasoline or kerosene frequently through the islands or along the coasts?

"Beside the schooner about how much capital would a man need to start with?

"These next questions are outside the practical end of this. I've read many stories the last few years having as their basis the rumored existence of prehistoric creatures in South America. Is there a large enough unexplored region to form a plausible location for such stories? Are they merely an imaginative reflection of modern discoveries in palæontology or have they a starting-point in some vague legends of some tribe? Is there a large unexplored tract in the Republic of Panama?

"I've been reading *Adventure* for nearly as long as it's been going and "Ask Adventure" beats even the stories, I think. I enjoy particularly your answers to queries.

"If you can give me this information I will be very grateful.

"Yours in the fellowship of the Camp-Fire."—HAROLD C. PALMER, U. S. S. *Sampson*, U. S. Naval Forces, European Waters, Base 6, care of Postmaster, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Your idea of trading along the Caribbean coast is all O. K. Trade for ivory-nuts, rubber, pearls, etc. Make Colon your base. Gasoline can be obtained in all of the good-sized coast towns. I would not suggest cargo-carrying except up the Patuca and Segovia. Rates for freight from the sea to the mining towns on the headwaters of these rivers run to about $77 a ton. On the way up you could trade the native Indians for gold-dust, getting big prices for your goods. Overalls, machetes, knives and cheap jewelry are good for these rivers.

If you had your schooner outfitted I consider an $800 bunch of trade goods enough to make the start. I think you could get this amount by paying part down and making arrangements to pay the balance later.

Concerning the prehistoric creatures in South America. I never have seen any of them and the only incident I ever heard was told me in Panama. It was as follows:

Some one in England wrote a story concerning a prehistoric horse he had killed with a club in one of the high mountains of Peru. The matter was discussed pro and con in the papers for a time and some society or other got hold of the story and sent out a party to investigate. When they came through Panama they mentioned their mission to "Slim" Edwards, telegraph operator for the Panama R. R. at Panama City. One of their party was sick and wanted to return and Edwards quit his job and went along. I asked "Slim" on his return if they found any trace of the horse and he told me that they found the skeleton in the place where the man had claimed to have killed it. According to his story it was very small, not any larger than that of a fox but appeared to be what the man had claimed. That is all so far as I know. You can obtain the address of Mr. Edwards from C. W. Northrop, Chief Dispatcher, Panama R. R., Ancon, C. Z., and write him direct if you are interested in history.

Yes, there are large enough unexplored places down there to make a plausible location for such stories as you mention. So far as I am concerned I don't know and I have given the sole incident I have ever heard along these lines.

There is a large unexplored tract in Panama except by the San Blas tribe. There is no danger of any white man exploring that, due to the extreme ferocity of these people.

California's Million-Acre Ranches

IN ADDITION to its mines, the Golden State has as many kinds of ranches as there are kinds of scoundrels in Germany:

Question:—"I would like to know if there are many ranches in California, and what kind. I am mostly interested in cattle."—BUGLER E. J. BRADY, Machine Gun Co., 71st Inf., Camp Kuehnle, Peekskill, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—There are a great many ranches in this State. There are big cattle ranches—one man in Pasadena sold one last week of 45,000 acres and two smaller ones that combined made 20,000 acres more. The old Miller & Lux combination owns in the neighborhood of a million acres.

There are sheep ranches, horse ranches, mule ranches, goat ranches, hog ranches, even rabbit ranches, where they raise Flemish giants and the other meat and fur producers. Then there are fruit ranches of all kinds, wheat-oat-barley-ranches, and great ranches where they raise melons for one crop and grain for the next in the same year.

We raise a tremendous lot of cattle in our forest reserves each year, besides those on privately owned land. They are scattered all the way from Mexico to Oregon, by the thousands.

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I am especially glad to hear from fellows in the Service and will go the limit to get information needed. Tell the boys.

Tampico

BEFORE the pressure of military duties compelled him to resign the editorship of Section Ten, Mr. Whiteaker wrote the following interesting reply to an inquirer:

Question:—"I am not at all sure that my questions will cover the ground *Adventure* gives you. If not please accept my apologies.

"My husband has a chance for employment at Tampico, Mexico. Could you tell me about schools, cost of living, etc.? Would it be a profitable move at more than double salary (in gold) received here and house furnished? I will be very grateful for any information you can furnish."—MRS. BROWN, Quanah, Texas.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Your letter received and will try to answer it to the best of my ability, as your questions are in some sense in accordance with the ground that I am covering for *Adventure*.

I will first tell you something about Tampico and then you can decide whether to go there or not.

Tampico is 600 miles from Mexico City, with a population of 20,000 inhabitants. It is one of the most important ports of Mexico, ranking next to Vera Cruz in east-coast traffic. The city is six miles from the mouth of the Panuco River. At certain seasons the Panuco is apt to overflow its banks and put the lower part of the town under water. The streets are regularly laid out on land almost as flat as a table.

There are several fine buildings and a Chamber of Commerce, and the city is modern in every way. There are five wharves in use.

The National Railway Company has the obligation to keep the jetty-works in good condition with a minimum depth at high tide in the channel of 22 feet.

Commencing at the jetties on both sides of the river are located the various loading wharves and the plants of the principal petroleum companies.

The climate is hot and damp, and malarial fevers are not unknown. During the short Winter season the port is visited by northers, which have a direct bearing upon the climate of the region. These winds are sometimes very destructive to shipping.

Tarpon fishing is very popular here during the season, which begins on December first and ends May first. A train-line (5c fare) connects the port with several attractive suburbs. The popular seaside resort is La Barre (6 miles) facing the Gulf at the mouth of the Panuco.

Tampico is the terminus of two branches of the National Railway, one leading to Monterey and thence to the border towns of Laredo, Brownsville, and Eagle Pass; the other, the San Luis Potosi section, crosses a rich tropical region lying immediately west of Tampico and thence up a steep mountain grade to the elevated central plateau.

The Panuco River is navigable between its head and Tampico and serves the Panuco and Topila oilfields.

Living expenses are a great deal more in Mexico at the hotels than in the United States. But for a family keeping house it would be cheaper, as the markets are kept supplied with fresh fruits, vegetables and meats every day.

The schools are not so good; that is, the public schools. There are many good Catholic schools and other private schools that are for the better class of people. There is no compulsory school law in Mexico. They have tried to have them but so far have failed.

I should think it would be a very good move, as double his present salary in gold would be just twice as much as he receives now. The gold dollar of Mexico is the same as our silver in value. Their silver dollar is worth not quite one-half of ours (49c).

I would not advise any one to go to Mexico at the present time as there is an intense feeling against Americans, but suggest that your husband get a leave of absence and go down and look the situation over before breaking up housekeeping. If everything is all right and he can see how he can better himself, then he can send for his family.

Hope that you will not hesitate to write again if I have not made this matter clear to you.

The Rhodesian Mounted Police

HERE'S a good service for those who've had a taste of war, and like it, as so many of the fellows do:

Question:—"I should like to get some information concerning the Rhodesian Mounted Police, especially concerning the work they do. I should also like to obtain the titles of any books written about them. If this letter is published in *Adventure* please withhold my name."— —— ——, 33d Inf., Gatun, C. Z.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—The Rhodesian Mounted Police are the British South African Police with headquarters at Buluwayo and Salisbury, South Rhodesia. They are military police; mounted but usually on foot by reason of the horse sickness. Mostly stationed at posts on the *veld*, where they patrol among the natives and assist in collecting hut tax, etc.; arrest cattle thieves, odd murderers, etc. Those in towns do patrol through town and reservations (forestry, farms, etc.). Some stations are fairly healthy; others rotten with malaria. Pay: troopers, five shillings per diem. Commissions through ranks; except for O. C.'s, usually seconded for service from the regulars. At one time used regularly to be provided with rebellions; but this practise has become unfashionable of late years.

I am speaking of the police in my day—about 1900. Since the Boer War they have probably—I have not heard so—been incorporated with the South African Constabulary (Transvaal and Orange Free State—that is, Orange River Colony now). Baden-Powell wrote a book on them in the early days, but have no means of looking up title here. For information apply to Secretary, the British South African Chartered Company, London Wall, London, G. B.

Hope this is of service. If other details are required, write me. But I have no up-to-date information.

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Hunting in Tennessee

THERE'S a lot of chatter about bears being thick in the Cumberland Mountains—the same apparently being noise for the most part, as our expert for that region neglects a chance to confirm it:

Question:—"Will you please tell me whether a non-resident from Ohio would have to have a license to hunt squirrel, rabbits and grouse or partridge? If so, what is the cost of a license? What is the best section in the Cumberland Mountains for hunting and camping?

"Can you give me the same information concerning Kentucky?"—ARTHUR C. VEITH, Bucyrus, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—Yes, a non-resident would be required to buy a hunter's license in order to hunt squirrel, quail, rabbits, or anything else, in Tennessee. Moreover, he must have permission from landowners, or be liable to fine for trespassing. The same applies to residents, but they have to pay less than non-residents have to pay for license. Where it would cost you $10, it would cost me only $2. The clerk of any county court sells licenses.

As to your question concerning the Cumberlands, I'm afraid to advise you to go to any one place. Almost anywhere is a good place to camp, it seems to me. But the chief game in there is squirrel and wild turkey, which is game that is found now in one section and now in another; in short, squirrel and turkey migrate, and are "where you find them." Personally, I do not think mountains a good place to hunt. I very much prefer lowland flatwoods or sedge-fields or stubble-fields. Unless one is experienced in the tricks of squirrel and turkey, one is pretty apt to be disappointed badly in mountain hunting; a fox has nothing on them.

Kentucky is out of my territory in the "Ask Adventure" service, and I don't know very much about the State. You might write the Chief Game Warden, at the Kentucky State capitol, and ask for a copy of Kentucky's game laws, which would be sent gratis to you.

In the event you take the outing, I wish you good luck.

P. S.—Before going into any State to hunt, it is advisable to write that State's Chief Warden, at the capital city, for copy of game laws. It saves trouble.

The Rattlesnake Market

WELL, a drummer—beg pardon, commercial traveler—once said that a man could sell anything if he tried hard enough in the right place, so there's hope for this inquirer:

Question:—"I am sending you the following questions which I would like very much to have you answer:

"Do you know of any markets for the following? Also prices?

"1—Rattlesnake skins, oil or venom.

"2—Rare birds—skins, etc.

"3—Butterflies and other insects.

"I am inclosing stamped envelope as per instructions and I want to thank you in advance for I certainly appreciate getting any information."—FRANK EMMERLING, Pittsfield, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—I do not find any market for rattlesnake skins or venom. You might write to Bronx Park Zoological Gardens, New York City, and ask them about this. The oil has a local sale for rheumatism, etc., but no general market. Also ask Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C. (Bureau of Fisheries.)

Rare birds and skins are no longer sold or bought legally in this country.

Butterflies and insects have a slow market in museums and from collectors. You may be able to learn through Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., about markets for these things. American Consular Service, also at Washington, might have indexed markets for butterflies and insects.

Canoeing in Northern Quebec

THOSE of you who are speculating as to where and when you'll spend your next vacation, may find a valuable lead from the subjoined correspondence:

Questions:—"For a year or so I have been hankering to make a long canoe trip in "God's Country," and although they still can call me 'kid' (as I'm only seventeen) I have been in every State in the Union but thirteen and just got back from Montana where I had been punching cows in Hysham.

"Well, to get down to business. Can you give me answers to the following questions? Would appreciate it greatly:

"1—Where can I get maps showing water routes of Quebec (Northern)?

"2—Is an Old Town the best canoe for such a trip?

"3—What would you suggest as a good trip in the wild parts of Quebec?

"4—Would rather go alone than with a guide. Would it be practical for two seventeen-year-old 'kids'?

"5—Can a fellow rely somewhat on his Winchester for meat?

"6—How are chances to catch fish *en route?*

"7—Is it necessary to have a license to carry a gun? And where should we obtain this license?

"8—Would, say, a month's canoeing up there necessitate many portages?

"I'm sure I'll appreciate the answers to these questions."—E. W. SMITH, Framingham, Mass.

"P. S.—What is the best time of year to take such a trip? I would like to go from somewhere near Hudson Bay to the St. Lawrence River, if such a route is possible without too many long portages."

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Answering specifically—

1. Write the Department of Lands and Forests, Quebec, P. Q., for maps of Northern and Northwestern Quebec. I can, if you prefer, probably obtain one of H. W. Quebec—the charge made by the Department is probably one dollar.

2. My experience is that the "Chestnut" canoe, made by the H. G. Chestnut Canoe Co., Fredericton, N. B., is the best all-round canvas-covered canoe on the market—especially for rough wilderness trips (their "Guides' Special" seventeen feet.) That, remember, is my personal opinion.

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3. One of the finest canoe cruises I know of is through Northwestern Quebec from Amos or O'Brien, on the new Canadian Government Transcontinental Line across through the Kenojevis waters, thence into the Ottawa waters, out at Ville Marie.

4. I would not myself undertake any such cruise without a capable, reliable man as guide; consequently I would not advise you to attempt it. Have a good guide along.

5. No hunting is open prior to September. If you purposed hunting, you would have to hold at least one B. G. non-resident license (in open season from September 1st) costing $25.

6. You can catch all the fish you want—G. N. Pike, big Dore and in certain waters salmon-trout and in others black bass.

7. See No. 5 answer. A .22 might be taken along on an August trip, but of course no killing of game then allowed.

8. Any of these cruises necessitate portages frequently; not many long ones, but many from 150 yards to one mile. Here again comes in the necessity of a good guide.

To see most live game such as moose, photograph same, and have normally best weather, would recommend trip of twenty-one days commencing around July 25th or August 1st.

The Cities of Maine

ANYBODY who has the idea that Maine is just a Summer resort and happy hunting-ground for the rest of the country, had better get over that notion quick:

Question:—"I am writing to you for a little information regarding the cities of Maine. I would like for you to name and describe the most important ones, and if you can, give me their location and what they are chiefly noted for. Any information you send will be greatly appreciated."—JAMES A. FEKAYS, Baltimore, Md.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—The most important cities of Maine are Portland, Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta, Waterville and Bath.

Portland is situated on Casco Bay and is a city of about 58,571, but the Summer population is much greater. There are no large manufacturing concerns, but many large wholesale houses, and much shipping.

Lewiston and Auburn together have a population of about 41,311. There are large cotton mills and shoe factories in these cities.

Bangor has a population of about 25,000. There are no large manufacturers here, but at South Brewer, a short distance from this city, is located the plant of the Eastern Manufacturing Company, a large paper mill employing about 1,500 hands.

Augusta, the seat of the capitol, has a population of 14,000. There are cotton mills and shoe factories here and several large publishing houses.

Waterville has about 12,000 inhabitants, has large cotton mills, and is the seat of Colby College.

At Bath are large ship-yards. At the present time many thousands are employed there, and it is hard to state just what the present population is.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DORIAN, MILDRED. Please write to MYRTLE JAMIESON, care of *Adventure.*

MCCORMOCK, L. "Smoky Pete." Who was with me in the Argentine on the Rio Deseado, near Port Desire, in 1914. Write to "SPANISH JACK," care of *Adventure.*

MILINE, or McGREGOR, "SCOTTY." Last heard of in Washington. Likely went South in 1912. Please communicate with C. MONTAGUE, care of *Adventure.*

WENTZEL, G. T. Will you please communicate with your wife; for little son's sake, return. Last heard of in Portland, Ore. Address—MRS. G. T. WENTZEL, Wellesley Court, Portland, Ore.

DEVINE, DAN. Butcher by trade. Last heard from in Spokane, Wash., in 1904. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his nephew. Address—J. KILTY, 336 College Ave., Fresno, Cal.

NICHOLS, FRANK BUTLER. Last heard of at Snow Lake, Ark., while at work on the M. H. & L. Railroad as engineer (civil). Address—R. H. S., care of *Adventure.*

REILLY, O'LEARY and SAVAGE, of Massachusetts T. C. COLLINS, of Oklahoma; MORSEA, a Brule Indian. All on board the U.S.S. *B. Mead*, Boston. Address—"SMOKE," care of *Adventure.*

WESTFALL, CLARENCE V. Many changes have taken place and it would be to your advantage to write at once. You have undoubtedly been misinformed. At least write. Address—L. D. W., Box 555, Morgantown, W. Va.

PAPPMANN, GEORGE, of Holy Name Parish, Kansas City, Mo. Your boyhood chum would be overjoyed to connect up with you again. Address—JAMES R. (GREENWOOD) MCNAUGHTON, Box No. 31, Pleasanton, Cal.

BAREDA, ST. REVATO. Native of Puebla, Mex. Last heard of was sailing for New York from Lima, Peru in December, 1916. Believed to be employed by W. R. Grace & Co. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated. Address—DANA B. REID, 56 Broadhead Ave., Jamestown, N. Y.

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BASTLA, CLIFFORD S. Last heard of in Detroit, Mich., February, 1918. Letters returned unclaimed. Please write your old pal. Address—HAROLD S. LOVETT, 28 Ermine Road, Chester, England.

SHATSWELL, RICHARD C. Last heard of at Soap Lake, Wash. He's about 37 years of age, weighs about 260 lbs., 5 ft. 5 in. tall. Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his brother. Address—JOHN SHATSWELL, Eldorado, Butler Co., Kansas.

MACCRACKEN, JOHN ALCORN, of Concord, Staten Island. Last heard of at Mt. Vernon, New York. Any information concerning him will be appreciated. Address SERGEANT FRED WANGENSTEN, 41 Evergreen Ave., Rosebank, P. O., Staten Island, N. Y.

HARRIS, FRED. Last heard of in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1912 and 1913, working in the ticket office of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Will you communicate with your old friend. Address—WALTER S. HARRIS, 144 Aero Squadron, Kelly Field, So. San Antonio, Texas.

CLAYTON, GEORGE, of Gore Bay, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Last heard of in Duluth, 1916. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his nephew. Address—No. 1003831, PTE. BORDEN HALL, Employed Staff, Canadian Trench Warfare School, Sussex, England.

. Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be printed alphabetically.

SJOGREN, GUS. Born in Kumgsor, Sweden. Last heard of on board Am.-Hawaiian S.S. *Alaskan* in August, 1915. About 6 ft. tall. Light complexion, light hair, blue eyes. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated. Address—GUS. JOHANSON, 1292 Amsterdam Ave., New York, N. Y.

THOMAS, ARTHUR R., (Brother.) About 5 ft. 8 in., slender, chestnut hair, blue eyes, 18 years of age. Last heard from at the Aluminum Works, Messina, N. Y., about middle of August. Information will be greatly appreciated. Address—MISS BOBBY THOMAS, 152 St. Denis St., Montreal, Canada.

BROWN, GRACE FLORENCE. About 5 ft. 6 in. tall, light hair and dark blue eyes. Last heard from December 18, 1916, in Oklahoma City, Okla. She is 21 years of age. Any information concerning her will be greatly appreciated. Address—MISS MARY EMMA BROWN, care of General Delivery, Dallas, Texas.

DIETZ, MRS. WILL. Last heard of at Alliance, Ohio. About 30 years of age. Any information will be appreciated. Address—MRS. N. C. CLENDENIN, 116 7th St., Parkersburg, W. Va.

HAYDON, DEWEY. Last seen in Cairo, Neb., June, 1918. Age 19, 5 ft. 7 in. Weighs about 150 lbs. Write to me. Something framed for next Spring. Address—DENNIS T. MCGUIRE, U.S.N., Port Townsend, Wash., care of Captain Pope.

HOUDYSHELT, JASPER E., of the U.S.S. *Nebraska*. Write to your old shipmate of the U.S.S. *Maryland*, or any of the boys of the *Maryland* and *Chicago*, of 1907 and 1908. Address—EDWARD NILES, Ervine, Cal.

STONE, GEORGE LAURIE. Last heard of in Portage la Prairie, Man., in 1895, when he was supposed to have gone to the Klondike. Blue eyes, brown hair, about 50 years old. Formerly of Perth, Ontario. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter. Address—MRS. C. R. LONDENSLAGER, 2242 Polk St., San Francisco, Cal.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CLIFTON, MRS. HARRY, née Maudice George. Born in England. Parents in Winnipeg, at Vermilloir Bay, Ont., in 1907-1908. Please write. Address—EVA STONE, Apt. 19, 2242 Polk St., San Franciso, Cal.

MILLER, GOLDENBERG, BURKE, ARBOGAST, KANE, and any other fellows at the W. U. Home, Washington, D. C., in June, 1918. A friend would like to hear from you. Address—M. B. GOLDBERG, Toledo, Ohio.

WHELAN, MAURICE. Was in Salt Lake City, last August. May have gone to Portland, Ore., or to San Francisco. Address—NED BOLAND, care of Arcade House, 66 Clay St., San Francisco, Cal.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-February or First-March issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALLAN, HUGHIE V.; Anderson, Carl or Charles; Bergstrom, Albin; Bradt, Charles Edwin; Clarke, James; Classant, Henri de; Ziebert, Fred; Hackett, Clyde O.; Kelly, Robert E.; King, Sergt. F. W.; King, G. E.; Kirby, Willie Holbert; Maguire, George; Malone, Dan C.; Mosher, Hugh; Porterfield, Wellington or Kelly, William; Roberts, Ora Frank; Rutherford, John, Emma, Lena; Wood, Sarah; Schelp, Roy E.; Smith, Jack; Turnbull, Mrs. Martha; Von Hacht, William (Don W. Smith); Walker, Rupert H.; Watts, John E.; Wood, Beverly.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Lee Hayes; Christian Baum; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams; L. Fitzsimmons: Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you—Address J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST APRIL ADVENTURE

Nine other red-blooded Adventure stories, besides the two mentioned in the ad. on page 2, will come to you with the First April number, in your hands on March 3d.

TOO MUCH CAUTION — *By Romaine H. Lowdermilk*
Alone by the shaft of his little mine lives *"Old Jeff,"* and no one knows why.

EVIDENCE — *By Gordon Young*
A tale of San Francisco when it was in swaddling clothes—and of the impetuous justice of that time.

BALTIMORE BILL — *By Hapsburg Liebe*
Way down in the mountains of Tennessee you meet him—this little shaver with a railroad all his own.

JACKSON'S LAST RUN — *By Charles Wesley Sanders*
Bad luck had come to other engineers on their last run, but *Jackson* was not afraid.

DEAD RECKONING — *By Jack Bechdolt*
A tale in which you meet *Captain "Fog-Horn" Hood* and do some rough steaming in Puget Sound.

KID GLOVES IN THE DISCARD — *By Grace P. T. Knudson*
A story of the Moro-fighting days in Mindanao and an expedition of a soldier, a fool and a faithful woman.

WITCH-DOCTORS Part II — *By Charles Beadle*
Deep into the African jungle goes *Birnier*, tortured in body and soul.

JAY BIRD'S JUDGMENT — *By W. C. Tuttle*
It is a case of get a cook or die of indigestion, so old man *Whittaker's* punchers decide to go to any extremes for self-preservation.

LIMPIN' BOB — *By William M. McCoy*
A story of the desert and a strange devotion.

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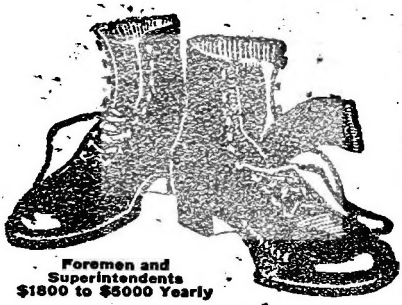
Learn to Fill Bigger Shoes



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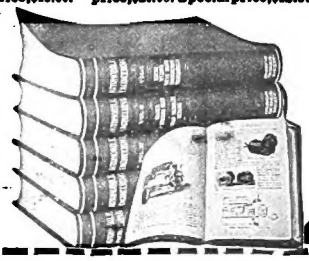

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